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ORIENTALISM BETWEEN TEXT AND EXPERIENCE: RICHARD BURTON, T. E. LAWRENCE AND THE
CHANGING DISCOURSE OF SEXUAL MORALITY IN THE ARAB EAST

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MAY 2013

STATEMENT

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

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SUMMARY

This thesis examines certain narratives in Richard Burton's and T. E. Lawrence's encounters with the Arab East. By juxtaposing both Orientalists' accounts of Arab sexuality with the changes that had been taking place in Arabic literary and cultural discourse of the time, I highlight what appears to be a disparity in representation. Nonetheless, I argue that this disparity stems from a perception of 'difference' that characterises the relationship between East and West. This perception of 'difference' is further explored in the writings of Arab scholars on European culture since the beginning of the Euro-Arab encounter in the nineteenth century.

I expose the epistemological bases of this modern encounter and situate it within the political changes that had been shaping the emerging Middle East on the eve of modernity. Burton and Lawrence are also situated within this context. I show how their Orientalist discourse involved a process of conflating 'text' and 'experience' while interacting with the Arab East. This conflation is evident in their textual rendition of certain experiential episodes they underwent in the Orient. While both Orientalists' attraction to the Arab East may have been epistemological in origin, I argue that their narratives on Arab homoeroticism have been discursively subjective. In this, they appear to reflect the selectivity with which *fin-de-siècle* Arab scholars had been reproducing accounts of their past cultural heritage; albeit paradoxically. When Burton and Lawrence seem to have been heightening manifestations of Arab male-to-male sexuality, their contemporary Arab intellectuals had been engaged in a process of systematic attenuation of the traces of past depictions of homoerotic desire in Arabic literature.

Although I focus on analysing texts from both Orientalists, I also draw on contemporary historical events, for they form part of the contextual framework in which my analysis operates.

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Randal passed away shortly after I passed my viva voce examination in January 2014. He was the first person I rang when I passed my viva; I will never forget how happy and proud he was. It is to Randal's memory that I dedicate this work.

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Feras Alkabani
August 2014

Chapter One:

**Epistemologies of Difference: An
Introduction**

The '(Un)changing East':

*Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgement Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the end of the earth!*
(Kipling 1889, Cited in Kipling 1912, p.234)

The Orient [...] existed as a set of values attached, not to its modern realities, but to a series of valorised contacts it had had with a distant European past. (Said 2003, p.85)

The concept of the 'Unchanging East' underpins much of Orientalist discourse.¹ A sense of alterity and otherness is implied in this notion. Yet the origins, purposes and background of this perception are complex and multi-layered. From fascination with the East to contempt and disapproval of its 'degenerate ways', European Orientalism's employment of alterity varies with the various Orientalists who have been to and/or written about the Arab East. Essential to this image of difference is a remarkable emphasis on sexuality. Derek Hopwood (1999) offers an insight into the background of Orientalist prejudice against the Muslim-Arab Orient's sexual morality. He traces these prejudiced Orientalist perceptions about Islam's (and the Arabs') sexual morality and points out how they originate in early narratives touching upon the Prophet's marital life and the number of wives he had;² this has led to all Muslims being accused of the 'lustfulness' with which their Prophet had been characterised (1999, p.6). Of course, this rhetoric of sexual/moral othering is to be seen in light of the wider Christian-Muslim rivalry in what eventually became two over-arching, theologically-determined mega-cultures: Christendom in Europe and a Muslim Caliphate in the (mainly Arabic-Speaking) Middle East.³ The essentialism and otherness imbedded in the Prophet's alleged 'lustfulness' and its 'transcendence' to his followers are crucial to the way in which Oriental Arab sexuality has been perceived and portrayed in Orientalist discourse.⁴ This image of essentialist and irredeemable 'difference' is, of course, relevant to the concept of the 'Unchanging East', which, quite paradoxically, also suggests an 'unchanging West' with which this 'static' Arab East forms a constant binary opposition. Unless, however, the oppositional logic to the

¹ The concept of the 'Unchanging East' and its application in Orientalist discourse will be further highlighted in my forthcoming chapters, particularly in Chapters Three and Four in relation to T. E. Lawrence.

² See Hopwood (1999, pp.6-9) for an account of the Prophet's wives and an overview of the depiction of his marital life in Orientalist literature.

³ Of course, this is not to disregard the other multiple communities who have lived in Europe and the Middle East. Despite the generalisation implied in this categorisation, I find it useful to highlight my argument in broad terms.

⁴ Edward Said and others have drawn on the comparative analysis in which the Prophet's conduct has been perceived and depicted in Orientalist literature. Said writes, "[...]Mohammed is always the imposter (familiar, because he pretends to be like the Jesus we know) and always the Oriental (alien, because although he is in some ways 'like' Jesus, he is after all not like him)" (2003, p.72). Orientalism's depiction of the Prophet's marital life, as discussed by Hopwood, forms an especially strong othering polemic, particularly when compared with Jesus's celibate life.

'Unchanging East' is a (constantly) changing West, whose cycle of constant 'change' may exhaust itself and somehow (re)turn to a (previous?) form that may resemble that of the East.

In either case, it has to be remembered that such perceptions of alterity and difference are fed by textual depictions (literary and otherwise), which are, in turn, representative of various wishes and fantasies of power, hegemony, desire and even escapism. More importantly, however, it should also be remembered that such perceptions of alterity are not exclusive to Orientalist (or Western) discourse. Yet their manifestations may differ from one culture to another and from time to time. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod (2011) shows how the nineteenth-century Arab rediscovery of Europe also registered a turning point in Arab attitudes towards the Continent's culture and its worth. Abu-Lughod places crucial importance on Napoleon's invasion of Egypt in 1798 and considers it the main catalyst in not only initiating modern Arab interest in European culture, but also in urging the Arabs to review their own cultural heritage (past, present and future) in line with Europe's (pp.21-22). This change represents a dramatic shift in cultural focus for the Arabs. Abu-Lughod points out that, until the eighteenth century, "[t]he Arab provinces of the Middle East lived in the shadow of the Ottoman Empire which obscured from their view the dramatic shifts which were then taking place in the world's power structure" (p.19). He continues to assert the *separateness* of both societies (the Arabs and the Europeans); he writes, "[o]n the one side was the West, where new advances in science and technology of warfare were being applied with dramatic success. On the other was the Ottoman Empire, still defending itself with lances and outmoded cavalry tactics" (p.19).⁵

This stark image of alterity appears to have been further enhanced by the Arabs' and Europeans' mutual awareness of it. Abu-Lughod continues, "[n]ot only were the societies different, but each was conscious of its apartness. Muslim Near East and Christian Europe were not only fundamentally opposed but each felt its own distinctness and each clothed its hostility in *noblesse oblige*" (p.20). Thus, the concept of the 'Unchanging East' in Orientalist discourse seems to be mirrored by a similar perception equally signifying *difference* in the Muslim Arab cultural psyche. Indeed, as Abu-Lughod argues, "[r]eal differences in culture and religion cannot account entirely for the alienation. It was due rather to a heritage deeply ingrained in each" (p.20). Crucially, however, the Arabs' sense of difference and alterity seems to have manifested itself in a very different way to that of Orientalist Europeans. Rather than

⁵ Of course, the apparent difference in technological advances of the time lends support to the concept of the 'Unchanging East', which will be further explored in my upcoming chapters, especially in relation to T. E. Lawrence's attraction to the Arabic Orient.

producing a parallel discourse to that of Orientalism, in which European (Christian) culture would be studied and altered, pre-nineteenth-century Arab scholars' perception of the difference between the two cultures seems to have been somehow translated into an aloof sense of a lack of interest in Europe and its cultural worth altogether. Abu-Lughod argues,

The Arabs of the eighteenth century suffered from the legacy of their glorious past which had coincided with Europe's darkest age. That legacy made the isolated Arab of the eighteenth century feel a certain smugness toward all Europeans whom he judged as barbarians, or at least, somewhat dull and backward boors. This anachronistic attitude, based on an image formed earlier and transmitted from one generation to the next without benefit of new information, was that European society had nothing of worth to offer. (pp.20-21)

This apparent lack of interest, a mode of othering in itself, stands in sharp contrast with the (often outspoken) European modes of othering, manifest in Orientalist discourse – despite the similar implied senses of auto-centricity and self-importance imbedded in both societies' modes of othering. More importantly, however, it also suggests a notion of lack of change – a concept of an 'Unchanged West', perhaps – that seems to mirror Orientalist perceptions and depictions of the Arab East's 'un-change'.

Yet the Arabs' apparent lack of interest, regardless of its origin or significance, did not last much beyond the eighteenth century – thanks to Napoleon's arrival in Egypt in 1798, which, according to Abu-Lughod, triggered Arab modern awareness of European culture and set in motion the Arabs' intellectual curiosity westwards (pp.21-22). Indeed, the significance of Napoleon's brief occupation of Egypt (1798-1801) is not to be underestimated. Hopwood points out how it was the first European invasion of central Muslim lands since the Crusades (1999, p.25). On a cultural level, however, it put an end to Egypt's long isolation from the European world and demonstrated the weakness and decay of the Mamluk-Ottoman system and the once-invincible Muslim armies (Abu-Lughod, p.27). In short, it was a 'first' as far as the Euro-Arab cultural encounter in the modern age is concerned (Hopwood, pp.26-28).

Not only did this encounter alert the Arabs to Europe's cultural, literary and scientific worth (and the disparity between the two societies in these domains), but it also impacted the way they would view their own past cultural heritage. In turn, this would affect the Arabs' perception of their present cultural production and the way it would now have to be considered in relation to the newly acknowledged 'superiority' of Europe's scientific and technological achievement. As a result, the pre-nineteenth-century Arab lack of interest in Europe – their mode of othering – has since been gradually replaced with a radical shift in "identification", as highlighted by Abu-Lughod:

From that point onward, there began a shift in goals, actions, and even identification, until in the twentieth century a noted Egyptian humanist could claim that Egypt, and by extension all the Arab world, belonged to the larger western world.⁶ Thus, from the hostile apartness perceived in the eighteenth century, there was a complete shift to the view that both societies, though at different levels and culturally unique, were *within the same framework*. This later sense of identity with the West plus the initial impulse toward change were set in motion by the French expedition. (p.21-2)

Interestingly, this shift in identification seems to have resulted from the realisation of the widening gulf between Arab and European scientific achievement; it is, thus, an *acknowledgement* of Europe's growing power and cultural 'superiority', which had been further manifesting themselves in imperial terms.⁷ Abu-Lughod (2011), Khaled El-Rouayheb (2009) and Joseph Massad (2007) explain how nineteenth and twentieth-century translation movements have introduced European culture into (a mainly appreciative) audience of Arab intelligentsia. Abu-Lughod offers a detailed account of the beginning of the Arab translation movement in the nineteenth-century and how it initiated and spread interest in European scholarship across the Arab world.⁸ He points out that "[a] by-product of the translations movement was the respect for western scholarship it generated among Arab men of letters, respect which was generalized to many other fields of learning" (p.76). Consequently, Abu-Lughod continues, "[...] the works of western orientalist began to be translated into Arabic.⁹ [...] Thus Arabs not only viewed the West through western eyes but also began to view themselves through those same eyes" (p.76).

It is precisely this act of self-reflection through the mirror of Orientalist literature that seems to have caused one of the most significant changes in certain strands of Arabic literature and culture gradually (yet steadily) across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. What I am referring to here is Arab conceptualisation of sexual morality and its representation

⁶ Taha Husayn (1889-1973) is the Egyptian writer who makes this claim in *Musaqbal al-Thaqafah fi Misr* (1938) [*The Future of Culture in Egypt*]. Joseph Massad (2007) offers a detailed overview of the author's analysis of Arab culture in the book. Massad's overview will be revisited in more detail in Chapter Four.

⁷ For the nineteenth century saw the beginning of the arrival of European colonial powers in the region. See Albert Hourani's chapter on "The Age of European Empires (1800-1939)" in *A History of the Arab Peoples* (2005, pp.265-352), in which he relates the following historical events: a French army landed and occupied Algiers in 1830, the British occupied the port of Aden in 1839 from India and expanded in the Arabian Gulf region. The Spanish invaded Morocco in 1860 and the French later occupied Tunisia in 1881. Egypt fell under British military intervention in 1882 and Italy declared war on the Ottoman Empire and occupied the coast of Tripoli in Libya in 1911. Later, the Levant was divided up between the British and the French in 1916 under the secret agreement of Sykes-Picot. Thus, the Arabic-speaking regions were witnessing the shift in power relations and seeing European armies occupying their lands for the first time in the modern age.

⁸ See Chapters 2 and 3 in Abu-Lughod's *The Arab Rediscovery of Europe* (2011) for more details on the development of the translation movement and the nature of the translated material in the nineteenth-century Egypt and the Levant.

⁹ "The first such [comprehensive historical] work to be translated was *Nihayat al-Arab fi Ta'rikh al-Arab*, based on a work by the French orientalist Sédillot, which appeared in Arabic in 1927"; Sédillot's original work, *Histoire des Arabes*, had been published in Paris in 1854 (Abu-Lugod 2011, p.76).

and depiction in literature. Khaled El-Rouayheb (2009, pp.154-160) shows how nineteenth-century Arab exposure to European scholarship resulted in the demise of a subgenre in Arabic poetry; namely, *ghazal al-mudhakkar*, or male-love poetry, a form of (mainly pederastic) homoerotic poetry, which had prevailed for centuries and was composed by many poets, including imams and religious scholars. El-Rouayheb (2009) and Massad (2007) warn against conflating the poetic representation of *ghazal al-mudhakkar* with what many Orientalists have assumed; that is, reading this literature as evidence for Islam's alleged tolerance (if not celebration) of sodomy and/or homosexuality. For, indeed, Islamic-Arab literary sexual morality had been structured and conceptualised differently. El-Rouayheb (2009, pp.1-11) shows how despite Islam's Abrahamic-based strict and outright prohibition of *liwat*, or sodomy (and indeed, all forms of same-sex sexuality), Muslim Arab poets, scholars and imams recognised a *difference* between celebrating the beauty of a youth/young man in poetry and committing the sinful prohibited act of *liwat*. In other words, expressing one's appreciation of (and even attraction to) the beauty of a handsome youth was seen as an act of expressing aesthetic appreciation in the form of art; that is, *ghazal al-mudhakkar* poetry. Importantly, this poetic expression did not automatically denote a willingness to commit a sinful transgression on the part of the writer. For an illicit (immoral) transgression would occur only if a 'transcendence' takes place from the realm of the literary/poetic to that of the carnal/physical, hence the acceptance and spread of the theme of *ghazal al-mudhakkar* in Arabic poetry before the Arabs' modern cultural encounter with Europe. So according to El-Rouayheb, such was the structure (or code) of sexual morality in Arab culture and literature.¹⁰

Of course, this delicate and rather subtle code in the Arabs' conceptualisation of what constituted their literary sexual morality does not seem to have been remarked or understood accurately in Orientalist discourse (El-Rouayheb 2009, p.3). On the contrary, the seemingly wide spread of homoerotic (and often outright pederastic) texts in Arabic literature appears to have enhanced the Arabs' sexual othering and their 'irredeemable' difference in Orientalist discourse. The Victorianism of the nineteenth-century Euro-Arab encounter would only enhance the difference in perceptions of sexual morality between the two societies. Yet, despite this accentuated difference in perceptions of European and Arab moral sexualities and their literary representations, a rather ironic commonality arises in the methodology in which these differences seem to have been articulated in their respective textual portrayals. When

¹⁰ A discussion of El-Rouayheb's (2009) and Massad's (2007) findings will follow in Chapter Four; I will also link the discussion to the influence of anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism, which seems to have further encouraged Arab appreciation (and assimilation) of European culture as a way of distancing themselves from what came to be regarded as the 'dark ages' under a 'decadent' Ottoman Empire, from which independence was demanded (and eventually fought for) by Arab nationalists.

Arab literary sexual morality sanctioned *textual* depictions of an otherwise Islamically-prohibited (i.e. 'illicit') male-to-male desire in Arabic literature's *ghazal al-mudhakkar* and frowned upon any transgression that may be committed by transcending from textuality to physicality, European Orientalism seems to have placed more emphasis on these very textual and literary narratives and interpreted them as *de-facto* representations of sanctioned forms of (physical) sexual behaviour in Muslim Arab culture.¹¹ Indeed, these textual narratives became the basis for a perceived actuality about the Arab East's *experiential* sexuality at large.¹²

To put it simply, Orientalism's apparent interpretation and depiction of Arab sexual morality (as narrated in Arabic literature)¹³ seems to have wrongly eliminated the very factor that would distinguish its ideological construction from its European (Victorian) counterpart. By so doing, it seems to have created a (moral) epistemological vacuum in the Arabs' sexual morality that could only be filled in with (and, indeed, understood in terms of) European conceptualisation of licit/illicit sexual behaviour. The irony lies in the paradoxical use of 'text' and 'experience' in both Orientalist discourse and pre-nineteenth-century Arab conceptualisation/construction of literary sexual morality. For the Arabs, the *subtle barrier* between 'text' (i.e. poetic/aesthetic expression) and the actual act (i.e. physical 'experience') of committing the carnal sin of illicit physical sexuality was enough to set apart the difference between sanctioned aesthetics and sinful transgressions. For Orientalists, on the other hand, the Arabs' subtle ideological barrier seems to have been largely invisible. Not only did it incite an automatic transgression in their (equally Abrahamic-based) regularisation of sexual morality, but it also conflated the two realms of 'text' and 'experience', so much so that the two, at times, become almost indistinguishable, as I shall show in the forthcoming chapters. In short, when Arab literati used 'text' (or textuality) as a *barrier* to distinguish their sanctioning of aesthetic literary depiction from indulging in illicit 'experience', quite ironically, Orientalists read the Arabs' 'text' as an *extension* of an (imagined/desired) 'Other' (and othering) sexual 'experience'.

¹¹ As we will see in the course of this thesis, examples of such critical transgressions are entrenched in certain Orientalist depictions of Arab sexuality. In Chapter Two, I will show how Sir Richard Burton's scholarship on Arab sexuality led him to chase the mirage of a mythical chapter on 'Pederasty' from an Arabic sex treatise, which he had previously translated from a French edition. Burton bases his conviction of the existence of the chapter on his presumption of the spread of the 'Pederasty' among the Arabs, which would render any sex treatise incomplete without an account on the practice.

¹² 'Experiential' is contrasted with 'textual'. My mode of comparison is based on an analogy between perceptions of 'text' and 'experience'; this mode of analysis runs throughout the thesis.

¹³ Chapter Two explores Sir Richard Burton's translations of certain Arabic texts and their depiction of sexuality. Burton's (often anthropological-like) commentaries on his translation of these texts will be discussed in detail.

Thus this clear difference in the ideological construction of (textual) sexual morality seems to have lent support to the Europeans' mode of othering, which, unlike that of the pre-nineteenth-century-Arabs, had been quite vocal and outspoken. It mainly manifested itself in what came to be known collectively as Orientalism, regardless of the distinctively various uses and purposes of this discourse. As we have seen, the Arabs' apparent lack of interest, on the other hand, had been their mode of othering. Yet this lack of interest was being gradually replaced with a growing awareness of Europe's scientific, technological and imperial might. This seems to have had a significant impact on the Arabs' innate construction of textual sexual morality. Indeed, the nineteenth-century translation movement brought with it not only an immense interest in Europe's technical scientific achievements, but also a general fascination with what was perceived as a sweeping change from 'barbarism' to 'civilisation'. One of Muhammad Ali's¹⁴ translators justified translating a European history book on the basis of what appears to be an appreciation of a sort of a 'morality tale', from which some wisdom could be put to good use; he writes "Europe [...] moved from the most extreme degree of barbarism to the highest peak of civilization and happiness ... it is also important for anyone wanting to learn about the administration of vast realms [the reference here is undoubtedly to Muhammad Ali] and about political principles ..." (cited in Abu-Lughod 2011, p.74).

Indeed, this surge in interest in European scholarship and culture seems to have had a pedagogical effect on nineteenth-century Arab scholars. Nonetheless, this intellectual appreciation of Europe's cultural worth also had another unintended effect, which caused a crisis of conflict. Of course, I am referring to the problematic encounter between the Arabs and their reflections on their own image as depicted in Orientalist discourse when the latter (Orientalist literature) started being translated and studied by an anxious Arab intelligentsia as highlighted by Abu-Lughod above. The conflict, of course, was rooted in the Arabs' realisation of what Orientalist discourse made of their own sense of sexual morality. This, as Massad (2007) shows, has had a major impact on the change in Arab construction and reconstruction of not only their modern sense of literary moral sexuality, but also what became a discursive and historiographically-oriented narration of their cultural past – and especially their literary heritage. Massad shows how "[...] modern and contemporary Arab historiography developed to a considerable extent around the repudiation not only of men's love for boys but also of all sexual desires it identified as part of the Arab past and which the Europeans present condemn and sometimes champions" (2007, p.1). Massad continues to point out the root of the conflict,

¹⁴ Muhammad Ali (1769-1849), Khedive of Egypt, supported the translation and modernisation movement in nineteenth-century Egypt. Abu-Lughod gives him credit for his enthusiastic support for scholarship, which "outlived him" (2011, p.77).

which appears to lie in the *fin-de-siècle* Arab intelligentsia's *internalisation* of Orientalist hermeneutical tools not only to produce their modern literature, but also to judge and selectively narrate certain episodes in their own past cultural heritage in light of this newly-adopted Victorianism in order to deal with what suddenly came to be perceived as signs of civilizational 'decline'. Massad argues,

Victorian notions of appropriate and shameful sexual behaviour and its civilizational dimensions would rank high in the thinking of these Arab intellectuals, not least because such notions were the basis for judgement not only of non-Europeans but also of late *European* Romantic art, literature, and poetry constituting the 'Decadence Movement', which was condemned as 'degenerate', especially on account of its sexually explicit motifs, including sadism, incest, sodomy, and lesbianism, and identified as 'barbaric' and 'primitive' in sensibility. Thus Orientalist depiction of Arab sexual desires as of a different qualitative and quantitative order signifying radical alterity would be countered by vigorous assimilationism on the part of the Arab historians who insisted that Arab sexual desires were not all that different from those of Europeans. Indeed, evidence would be produced to demonstrate that when medieval or modern desires of Arabs did deviate from Victorian ethics they were and are condemned by the hegemonic Arab ethical system. (2007, p.15)

Of course, this major cultural shift in Arab moral attitudes towards sexuality and its artistic representation (literary and otherwise) is far more complex than can be summed up here. I will, however, return to discuss it in more detail and relink it to the Arabs' realisation of the widening gap in power between the European Powers and the Ottoman Empire as well as the crucial impact of anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism in Chapter Four.¹⁵

"Homotextuality": from 'textuality' to 'homosexuality'?

Homotextuality manifests itself more often in rhetorical style than in content. A document becomes 'of homosexual interest' by its use of carefully chosen adjectives, by the adoption of particular 'signifying' images, names or terms, or by its connection to an Orientalist or Primitivist trope. (Bleys 1996, p.11)

What I would like to re-examine at this stage is the concept of *difference/alterity* in light of Massad's argument above as well as its epistemological relation to the formula of 'text' and 'experience'. To begin with, the Arabs' *mode of othering* appears to have gone through a radical change:¹⁶ from 'lack of interest' in Europe, which denoted an essentialist, anachronistic (if not aloof) approach to European culture, to full embracement – or "vigorous

¹⁵ Chapter Four posits the Arab Revolt, which can be seen as the experiential manifestation of anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism, vis-à-vis my analysis of T. E. Lawrence's role in it and his Orientalist depiction of it in his *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. This is done after further contextualisation of the cultural strand of anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism has been provided in the opening of the chapter.

¹⁶ Of course, partially at least, this change has to do with the 'change' in the 'object' (or perceived opponent Other) from which the Arabs wanted to differ. As I will show in Chapter Four, the new 'Other' had largely become the Ottoman Empire, from which anti-Ottoman Arab intellectual nationalists wanted to distance Arab culture.

assimilationism”, to use Massad’s expression – of (Victorian) European moral codes of conduct. Abu-Lughod (2011) describes “[t]he history of the Arab world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries [as] essentially a history of transformation” (p.18). This assimilation-oriented transformation appears to be a process of re-Orientalism. Yet, Orientalist discourse is notoriously *textual* in its approach. Indeed, the vast, immeasurable body of scholarship that can be classified as ‘Orientalist’ speaks for itself. Nonetheless, a specific strand of Orientalism that has been behind much of the seemingly de-facto association between the (Muslim-Arab) Orient and Other sexuality seems to have emerged in (often anthropological-like, annotated) translations of Oriental literary texts. Hopwood (1999, p.13) places a great emphasis on Barthèlemy d’Herbelot’s *Bibliothèque Orientale* (1697). Drawing on Edward Said’s analysis of the book’s importance, Hopwood (1999) points out how “[t]he *Bibliothèque* was not just a work on the life of Muhammad or the history of the Saracens. It tried to encompass much more. The Orient was becoming more than a place where Arabs or Muslims lived, where Muhammad had established Islam. [...] [T]he area was being integrated more fully into the European consciousness” (p.13).

Interestingly, however, and despite d’Herbelot’s book’s significant contribution to Europe’s knowledge about the Arab East, the Orient’s popular image had not been universally publicised and propagated before Antoine Galland’s major contribution to Orientalist discourse (Hopwood, p.13). In Hopwood’s words, Galland “[...] who wrote the introduction¹⁷ to the *Bibliothèque* [...] was to set the seal on the Orient as the place in the life of Islam and the Arabs where the most magical and romantic happenings took place” (p.13). For Antoine Galland was the first to translate *The Arabian Nights* into a European language.¹⁸ Yet, as Hopwood puts it, “[i]n his introduction to the [non-fictional] *Bibliothèque Orientale* Galland had stressed the usefulness of knowledge about the Orient; in *the Arabian nights* [sic] he presented the reader with another kind of approach” (p.14). Hopwood continues, “Although they [the *Nights*] did not portray the real ‘East’ – and they were not intended to do so – it was from these tales that many people formed their ideas about the area” (p.14). This is so, of course, despite Galland’s relatively selective translation, for he chose not to translate the tales

¹⁷ Not only did Galland (1646-1715) write the introduction of d’Herbelot’s *Bibliothèque*, but he also completed the encyclopaedia and prepared it for publication in 1697 after d’Herbelot’s death (Warner 2011, p.15).

¹⁸ Galland published his translations of selected tales from *The Arabian Nights* in French between 1704-1717 (Hopwood 1999, p.13). The last two volumes, Vols XI and XII, appeared two years after Galland’s death; the last four volumes of Galland’s *Nights* were informed by oral recitations of a “cultivated Syrian living in Paris, a Christian – a Maronite – called Hanna Diab, who knew French, Arabic and Turkish and had a large repertoire of stories” (Warner 2011, p.15).

which he deemed to be overly explicitly sexual.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the importance of Galland's contribution to Orientalism lies in instigating, asserting and propagating the concept of Arab Eastern sexual laxity and otherness.

Moreover, it would be interesting to posit Galland's translation of *The Arabian Nights* – a highly fictional text – with his contribution to the non-fictional *Bibliothèque Orientale*, in which he asserted the importance of “knowledge about the Orient”. For, just as he stressed the epistemological value of the encyclopaedia, i.e. the *Bibliothèque orientale*, Galland seemed to echo the same message in the preface to *Les Mille et Une Nuits*. Warner (2011) argues that “he saw the tales as continuing the work of illuminating oriental culture and thought to the West” (p.15). Already, there appears to be a conflation between ‘text’ and ‘experience’ (or fiction and non-fiction) in Galland's epistemological approach to the Orient. Yet Galland was merely a ‘trend-setter’,²⁰ so to speak. For the trend continued, developed and flourished, especially in the eighteenth century when Islam's alleged “[s]exual laxness, once so strongly criticized, was now positively attractive to a more secular, enlightened public” (Hopwood 1999, p.16). Nonetheless, the problematic epistemological approach, which appears to blur the barrier between fiction and non-fiction (or literary text and perceived experiential reality), seems to have developed uninterrupted in eighteenth-century Orientalist discourse.

A good example of this strand of textual-based, fantasy-oriented narrative of literary Orientalist scholarship is William Beckford (1760-1844) and his romantic novel, *Vathek* (1782). Unlike Galland's translation of *The Arabian Nights* or Chardin's travelogue,²¹ both of which are based on original Oriental narratives (textual or experiential), Beckford's book was a medley of fictionalised Arab history and European Orientalist fantasy, produced by an Englishman who had never been to the Orient. Loosely based on the life of the Abbasid Caliph, Abu Jaffar Harun al-Wathiq ibn al-Mutasim (816-847), Beckford's narrative brilliantly manipulates an episode in Arab history and uses it as ‘raw material’ to inspire an already textually-based Orientalist fantasy. In his introduction to the 1887-English publication of the book,²² Henry Morley calls

¹⁹ The first full European translation of *The Arabian Nights* was Sir Richard Burton's 1885-86 *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, which will be discussed in detail in the forthcoming chapter. Before Burton's full translation, however, there had been a number of translations, which gradually increased the number of the tales included.

²⁰ Another important Orientalist, who went to and wrote about Persia and Muslim sexuality before Galland, is Jean-Baptiste Chardin (1643-1713), or “the Chevalier Chardin” as he referred to himself. The first edition of his book, *Journal du Voyage* (1686) was very influential as it provided material for Montesquieu, Rousseau and Galland. See Hopwood (pp.14-15).

²¹ *Voyages de Monsieur le Chavalier Chardin en Perse et Autres Lieux de l'Orient* (1711) is the title of the complete work of Jean-Baptiste Chardin; it is based on his sojourns in Persia in the late seventeenth-century. The first edition was published in 1686 as mentioned in the footnote above.

²² *Vathek* was originally written in French in 1782 and published in Paris in 1787. A brief introduction about the author and his work is provided by Henry Morley in the 1887 English publication of the novel.

Vathek the “thousand and second night” – i.e. an addition to the tales of *Thousand and One Nights* of *The Arabian Nights* – “with the difference that it joins to wild inventions in the spirit of the East touches of playful extravagance that could come only from an English humourist [...]” (2012, Loc. 22).

For his part, Hopwood (1999) considers the novel a “new departure in literary style” (p.20). He argues that “Beckford uses the Orient as an escape from his identity at home [...]” and that *Vathek* turns the Orient into “a place of personal experience [...]” as opposed to the way it had been used before; that is, “[...] a setting for an objective and detached approach [...]” (p.20).²³ While Hopwood sees *Vathek* as “[...] a deeply amoral tale [that is] said to mirror his [Beckford’s] own adulterous relationship with his cousin’s wife Louisa” (p.20), Morley suggests that Beckford may have been thinking about *Vathek*’s tower in the novel, when, in 1796 he started building and rebuilding his own at Fonthill (2012, Loc. 33). In either case, the textual (fictional) and actual (non-fictional and experiential) personal narratives seem already intertwined. Furthermore, Morley points out how one of young Beckford’s music tutors,²⁴ the Earl of Chatham (who had also been his father’s friend), “thought him so fanciful a boy – ‘all air and fire’ – that he advised his mother to keep the *Arabian Nights* out of his way”, which, Morley continues “[h]appily, she could not [...]” as *Vathek* becomes the thousand and second night in the *Arabian Nights* (2012, Loc. 17-25). Indeed, even the first unauthorised translation of *Vathek* from French to English, allegedly omitted the author’s name and presented the work as a translation of an “*Arabian Tale, from an Unpublished Manuscript*” claiming that the tale was translated directly from Arabic.²⁵

The complexity of the intertwining narratives (textual, experiential, personal and cross-lingual) in (and through) which *Vathek* was composed sheds light on an eighteenth-century Orientalist take on the impact *The Arabian Nights* had had on Western perceptions of the Arab East. As Hopwood argues, “Beckford’s work allowed European readers to become voyeurs – to peep in on Oriental life in an attempt to gratify their own sexual fantasies. [...] [I]t [also] established the image of an erotic, sexually liberated Middle East” (pp.20-21). Yet, this is merely an example of an Orientalist *literary* work that managed to do so without having the epistemological authority of its author’s experiential knowledge of the Orient. For, unlike other Orientalists, Beckford had never been to the region. Nonetheless, his manipulation of an

²³ See Hopwood (1999, pp.12-21) for a detailed analysis as to how earlier various Orientalists had used the Orient.

²⁴ Interestingly, his other music tutor was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart himself (2012, Loc. 17).

²⁵ Morley suggests that the unauthorized translation originally appeared in 1784 (2012, Loc. 25); however, other sources suggest that the first English translation appeared in 1786 and was translated by the Reverend Samuel Henley.

episode in Arab history, along with the existing literary-based perceptions of Arabian otherness (as depicted in European translations of *The Arabian Nights* among other works) seems to have enabled his work to “stand as a model for later romantic writings or act as a spur to visit the area itself in search of similar fantasies” (Hopwood, p.21).

Thus, while Beckford’s “[...] imagination” seems to have admittedly had to “[roam] to other countries in search of pleasure it [could] no longer [find] at home” (cited in Hopwood, p.20), later Orientalists did not have to merely rely on their imaginations. Indeed, much of nineteenth-century Orientalist scholarship was armed with experiential as well as textual (linguistic: literary and translational) epistemological approaches to the Arab East. A great deal of it was curiously intrigued by what Edward Said refers to as the “sexual experience unobtainable in Europe” (2003, p.90). Said argues that,

Virtually no European writer who wrote on or travelled to the Orient in the period after 1800 exempted himself or herself from this quest: Flaubert, Nerval, ‘Dirty Dick’ Burton, and Lane are only the most notable. In the twentieth century one thinks of Gide, Conrad, Maugham, and dozens of others. What they looked for often – correctly, I think – was a different type of sexuality, perhaps more libertine and less guilt-ridden; but even that quest, if repeated by enough people, could (and did become) as regulated and uniform as learning itself. In time “Oriental sex” was as standard a commodity as any other available in the mass culture, with the result that readers and writers could have it if they wished without necessarily going to the Orient.²⁶ (2003, p.190)

Nonetheless, and despite the seemingly cyclical nature of this (textual-experiential-textual) epistemological approach to the Arab East and its sexuality,²⁷ this experience-based Orientalist scholarship seems to have further enhanced the otherness of the Arab East by drawing on (and allegedly documenting) first-hand experiences – not merely literary-based anecdotes. This is particularly relevant to Orientalists who spoke the Arabic language and whose work included anthropological-like material. Yet, what is supposedly presented as non-fictional scholarship

²⁶ The commodification of “Oriental sex” will be linked to Marcus Wood’s work on the history of pornography and what constitutes accounts of pornography in *Slavery, Empathy and Pornography* (2002). This idea will be revisited and applied specifically to Richard Burton’s and T. E. Lawrence’s portrayals of Arab and Oriental homosexuality and how they contributed to pornographic discourse.

²⁷ Edward Said suggests that “Oriental sex” has become “a standard commodity” that can be consumed at home by readers, without having to be physically present in the East as such. This, of course, sheds light on the importance of the *textually-woven image/perception* of Oriental life that appears to have been deeply entrenched in European psyche by means of initially reading about the East (be it via translations of Oriental literature and/or Orientalist scholarship) and then experientially visiting it in order to reproduce it textually, and, thus, enhance, this image/perception. As I will show in my forthcoming chapters, certain types of Orientalist scholarship seem to fit into a model of reproducing perceptions about the Orient whose trajectory goes from text to experience and then back to text (i.e. text-experience-text).

often remains tainted with highly subjective semi-fictional narratives,²⁸ which would further problematize Orientalist epistemology.

As I will show in the forthcoming chapters, this is largely true of both Sir Richard Burton (1821-1890) and T. E. Lawrence (1888-1935), whose complex relationships with the Arab Orient represent excellent examples of Victorian, *fin-de-siècle* and even modern Orientalist manipulation of text and experience and the resultant epistemological narratives, which reproduced perceptions of Oriental-Arab 'difference'. To begin with, both Orientalists spoke Arabic and spent considerable time in the Arab East. For his part, much of Burton's fame springs from his full and complete translation of *The Arabian Nights* (1885-86). It is significant that Burton's translation of a fictional work somehow appeared fitting as a 'prologue' for his infamous "Terminal Essay" – a non-fictional, anthropological account on (mainly Eastern and non-European) sexuality and the spread of "Le Vice" in a geographical zone that, according to Burton, is climatically determined. As for T. E. Lawrence, he is predominantly known for his part in the Arab Revolt (1916), which contributed to the eventual collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the dramatic shift of powers in the region. Lawrence's masterpiece, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1922), is his personal narrative of the events of the Arab campaign. The rather ambiguous genre of the book, with its striking homoerotic references, is yet another remarkable illustration of Orientalist manipulation of text, experience and personal psychosexual narratives.

Another ground of commonality between the two Orientalists is their critical relationship with and use of Empire in relation to their exploration of the Arab East. While Richard Burton rebelled against British Victorianism (with all of its connotations and significances), T. E. Lawrence was a romantic figure pursuing a fantasy in the new modern (and modernist) age of the First World War. In either case, both Orientalists were 'official delegates' of Empire to the East; they operated in the era of the modern Euro-Arab cultural and political encounter. Nonetheless, neither Orientalist was particularly representative of his class and status. If anything, it would be fair to describe them both as 'English eccentrics', who probably felt more 'at home' abroad – in the Arab East, the locale which was behind much (if not most) of their intellectual and scholarly inspiration. Their eccentricity also lends itself to their rather ambiguous interest in 'Other' sexuality; that is, Oriental-Arab same-sex desire and their subtle critique and often-ambivalent depiction of its significance. Unlike others, who could now be

²⁸ These subjective narratives will become clearer when I discuss Sir Richard Burton's and T. E. Lawrence's textual takes on the Arabic Orient and point out how their narrative often seems to internalize them within the texture of their texts. In other words, both Burton and Lawrence, subconsciously perhaps, become characters, if not heroes, in their own ambiguous semi-fictional (or semi-factual?) depiction of their Oriental ventures.

referred to as ‘openly homosexual’ Orientalists,²⁹ both Burton and Lawrence posited a very intriguing analytical critique of their perception of Eastern Arab sexuality. Finally, both Orientalists attempted a sort of masquerade-aided metamorphosis, which would, if only temporarily, transform their imperial European subjectivity into an Oriental Arab one. More importantly, their masquerade had enabled them to bear witness to a ‘taste’ of Oriental sexuality whilst in disguise, as we will see in the forthcoming chapters.

Their recorded episodes have contributed to Orientalist discourse providing indisputably powerful textual narratives that are ostensibly supported by first-hand experiential epistemologies. Despite their individually unique approaches to the Arab East, both Orientalists’ accounts have lent support to asserting and heightening existing concepts of ‘difference’ and ‘un-change’ of the Arab East.

Yet it is important to situate both Orientalists within the tradition of Anglo-Arab travel writing, which, as Tabachnick (1973, p.11) points out, started with William Kinglake’s *Eothen* (1844). In this work, Kinglake “used the Near East not as an area, but as a literary theme” (Jewett 1964, cited in Tabachnick, p.11). Tabachnick highlights the recurrence of this use of the Arab Orient in other writers’ works; he writes, “By making the writer more important than what he sees during his travels, Kinglake developed a literary technique inherited by Charles Doughty, author of the monumental *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, and by T. E. Lawrence, whose epic of Arabian adventures, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, becomes a searing confession of character” (p.11). Doughty, whose book and narrative greatly influenced Lawrence, would also touch upon an important point that seems to have united our Orientalists in their approach to the Arab East; namely, the tendency to present the Arab Orient as an alternative reality to the ‘unsatisfactory’ conditions in British society. In 1913, Doughty would admit that, “The *Arabia Deserta* volumes had necessarily a personal tone. A principle cause of writing them was besides the interest of the Semitic life in tents, my dislike of the Victorian English; and I wished to show and thought I might be able to show, that there was something else” (cited in Tabachnick, p.14). As we will see in the forthcoming chapter, the Arab East does indeed feature as an alternative reality offering ‘Other’ desirable possibilities for both Burton and Lawrence. The literary connections between Doughty’s and Lawrence’s narratives about the Arab East have been established and situated within the tradition of Anglo-Arab travel writing.

²⁹ The subtle and undetermined sexuality of both Burton and Lawrence can be contrasted with the more openly declared (or speculated upon) sexualities of figures such as Oscar Wilde and André Gide among others. I argue that both Orientalists’ sexual indeterminacy is significant for it seems to replicate the subtlety in which sexuality, itself, appears to be perceived/misperceived. In other words, its very indeterminacy gives way to potential fluidity, which helps avoid issues of anachronism when it comes to categorisations of sexuality and their socio-historical and cross-cultural contextual considerations.

Importantly, however, I argue that Burton's narrative would also fall into this literary tradition. For he, too, went on a 'venture' in the Arabian desert in 1853 disguised as a Muslim pilgrim. Burton published his account of his Hajj experience, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah*, in two volumes in 1856. Moreover, like Doughty, Burton's "dislike of the Victorian English" had been strongly vented through many of his works that criticise the hypocrisy of Victorian sexual morality and dismiss it in favour of Oriental and Arab 'sexual enlightenment', as we will see in Chapter Two. It is important to situate Burton within this literary paradigm of Orientalist writing about the desert and the Arab East, for his account was published after Kinglake's in 1844 and before Doughty's in 1888, the year Lawrence was born. Interestingly, Lawrence is to be credited with much of the enthusiasm surrounding the rediscovery of Doughty's book in 1921, when he wrote a new introduction to its new publication praising Doughty's book as "one of the greatest prose works in the English language, and the best travel book in the world" (cited in Tabachnick, pp.13-14). Of course, Lawrence's own book, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, which was published a year later (in 1922), bears significant signs of the influence of Doughty's style. Nonetheless, all of these Orientalists' narratives share a romanticised vision of the Arab East that does not necessarily depict it factually, despite their narrative authority as 'Arabian travellers'. Indeed, as Michael Foss points out,

Those who followed Burton's guide were likely to enter into a world of subtle unreality designed to satisfy a poet's need ... Arabia continued to be illumined by the poet's shifting light. For the rest of the nineteenth century, the men who informed England most successfully of the frontier land were poets all - Palgrave, Blunt and Doughty ... Perhaps the English public could accept no other presentation; for whereas explorers of unknown countries started with few preconceptions, the Arabian traveller from Europe took with him the historical memories of over a thousand years of conflict with Islam. He necessarily entered into the 'fabled' land of the Arabian Nights. (cited in Tabachnick, p.12)

However, what sets Burton's and Lawrence's narratives apart from other Anglo-Arabian travel writers is their keen interest in Arabian sexuality and the way in which their textual rendition of Arab homoerotic desire was imbued with a sense of fetishisation that heightened and propagated existing Orientalist concepts of Arab 'difference', albeit differently.³⁰ For Burton and Lawrence's critique of Arab same-sex desire was rather complex. While the critique was generally ambivalent, it acted under a set of subjective narratives that often openly

³⁰ It is for this reason (i.e. focusing on Orientalist representations of Arab homoerotic desire) that I do not intend to include Charles Doughty's narratives in my textual analysis of Orientalist depictions of the Arab East, despite his major role as a pioneer in the tradition of Anglo-Arab travel writing. However, references to Doughty's *Arabia Deserta* and its important influence on Lawrence will be cited in the course of this study.

championed and admired aspects of what was perceived and represented as an unchanging Arab sexual 'difference', as I will show in detail over the course of this thesis.

However, we ought to remember that, as pointed out above, the time in which both Orientalists were writing was the age of "transformation" for the Arabic-speaking world. Not only were the Arabs becoming aware of their own sexually and morally polarised (othered) image in Orientalist discourse, but they had also been reacting to it by assimilating Victorianism. In other words, both Orientalists' depiction of 'un-change' and 'difference' was arguably (and paradoxically) taking place at a time of *significant change* and closer cross-cultural consensus, which would, one may assume, result in minimising the perception of 'difference' between European and Arab culture.³¹ Indeed the legacy of the nineteenth-century translation movement in Egypt is not to be underestimated. As Abu-Lughod shows, one of its major consequences was the creation of new generations of educated Egyptians, who were the product of this systematic process of "westernisation". Abu-Lughod (2011, pp.67-68) points out that a contemporary literate Arab reader would have begun to enjoy virtually the same 'worldview' as that of his European counterpart; he writes,

Such a reader would also have had available to him a concrete image of the political, economic and natural geography of the world. The location and characteristics of European countries and, indeed, the remainder of the world in so far as it was known to European scholars, were made a part of his own *weltanschauung*. He was no longer dependent on the inaccuracies of the traditional geographical works written by medieval Arab geographers. [...] Perhaps most significantly, an Arab reader would have been able to expand and deepen his knowledge about the West. On the social side, he had available to him information concerning western customs, manners and traditions. On the artistic side, the books implanted an awareness of and a taste for French literature which had far-reaching effects on the evolution of Arabic literature. And finally, on the political side, the Arab reader delving into the translated works would have developed an awareness of the distinct European nations in both a geographic and historical sense. The previous assumption that all Europeans could be classified simply as 'Christians' or 'Franks' was no longer tenable for educated Arabs. (p.68)

As we will see later, this "*weltanschauung*" will also extend to Arab construction of sexual morality, which will, in turn, contribute to its reconfiguration of it in line with European (Victorian) values. However, as far as Burton and Lawrence are concerned, it was not this growing sense of 'similarity' that seems to have attracted them to the Arabic Orient. On the contrary, it was the perceived *otherness* of Oriental Arab sexuality that had, among other

³¹ Of course, the Arabs' cultural shift would have been a long, patchy and complex process. Yet, even T. E. Lawrence, who had been attracted to the East partially (if not mainly) because of his perception of its 'eternal antiquity' and 'un-change', appears to have eventually recognised a significant change in the East, for which he wrote an ironically titled article, "The Changing East", acknowledging the great change, of which he was a part. The article, which was published in the *Arab Bulletin* post-the Arab Revolt, will be briefly revisited in Chapter Three.

attractions, lured both Orientalists to the Arab East. Evidently, both Orientalists' textual reaction to their (physical) experience in the Orient is coloured with various (othering) sexual references.³² In other words, their involvement in the Arab East reproduced *epistemological narratives of Oriental Other sexuality*. Yet, as pointed out by El-Rouayheb (2009) and Massad (2007), it was these very Orientalist textual narratives (regardless of their scholarly/pedagogical aims and motives), which the intellectuals of the Arab *Nahda* were vigorously opposing.³³

Ironically, however, the *Nahda* intelligentsia's reaction to what it perceived as a process of moral/sexual polarisation also involved an *epistemological* narrative that began with the translation movement and resulted in what Massad terms as the "vigorous assimilationism" of Victorian values.³⁴ Nonetheless, the nineteenth-century epistemologically oriented scholarly discourse of the Arab *Nahda* was, somehow paradoxically, quick to pick up on an equally polarising perception of 'difference' in sexual morality between the European West and the Arab East.³⁵ As early as the Egyptian encounter with Napoleon's French expedition in Egypt (1798-1801), Arab perceptions of European culture seem to have shown a particular, morally-inclined interest in European socio-sexual customs and gender relations, pointing out their perceived 'difference'. The Egyptian chronicler, Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti (1754-1825) presents a valuable chronicle of the French expedition, including a "complete" rendition of the Napoleonic Proclamations (Abu-Lughod, p.35).³⁶ Al-Jabarti displays a remarkable admiration for French scholarship; he describes the *Institut d'Egypte* "where the French installed their scholars and housed an excellent library with a wide variety of books, including those written in Arabic and other Islamic languages" (Abu-Lughod, p.37). Abu-Lughod explains,

³² Albeit, their depictions of Oriental Other sexuality differed to reflect their different purposes as I shall show over the following chapters.

³³ *Nahda*, Arabic for 'renaissance', refers to the mid-nineteenth-century Arab cultural movement, which is largely responsible for the shift in the construction of Arab literary sexual morality. See Massad (2007, p.51). A historical overview of the Arab *Nahda*, which is often referred to as cultural Arabism, will be provided at the beginning of Chapter Four.

³⁴ In this light, one can perhaps see the similarity between Orientalist discourse and that of the *Nahda* movement; both discourses were epistemological in their orientation and they both relied on translation.

³⁵ It ought to be remembered that the *Nahda* itself was triggered by the modern Euro-Arab encounter as well as the ensuing translation movement. Although Muhammad Ali's generous sponsorship of the process of westernisation, which was manifested by a state-sponsored growth in translating European works as well as funding commissioned Egyptian students in Europe, may have been inspired by a need for gaining European military and technical knowledge, he (Muhammad Ali), along with the Head of the School of Languages, Sheikh Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, actively sought non-technical material and ensured it, too, was translated. See Abu-Lughod (pp. 60-77).

³⁶ Noticeably, however, al-Jabarti's account of the Napoleonic Proclamations missed out the word 'republic', as he did not appear to have comprehended its significance in Arabic; Abu-Lughod sees this as evidence of the Arabs' ignorance of the French Revolution and what had been happening in Europe at the time (2011, pp.35-36).

He [al-Jabarti] seems to have been deeply impressed with the abundance of scientists attached to that establishment, fascinated by their strange equipment and their occasional experiments. These aroused the curiosity of the Egyptian historian. Furthermore, he observed with approbation their serious method of work, their courtesy to curious visitors of the native population, and their interest in 'educating' intelligent Egyptians who frequented the *Institut*. (Abu-Lughod, p.37)

Despite his unequivocal appreciation of French scholarship, al-Jabarti did not conceal his disapproval of other aspects of French culture. Abu-Lughod (2011, p.37) and Massad (2007) highlight the "scandalous terms" (Massad, p.4) in which al-Jabarti portrayed "French mores" (Massad, p.4). In *Tarikh Muddat al-Faransis bi-Misr* (1213 H.),³⁷ al-Jabarti observes,

Their [the French's] women do not cover themselves and have no modesty; they do not care whether they uncover their private parts. Whenever a Frenchman has to perform an act of nature he does so wherever he happens to be, even in full view of people, and he goes away as he is, without washing his private parts after defecation. If he is a man of taste and refinement he wipes himself with whatever he finds, even with a paper with writing on it, otherwise he remains as he is. They have intercourse with any women who pleases them and vice versa. Sometimes one of their women goes to a barber's shop, and invites him to shave her pubic hair. If he wishes he can take his fee in kind. (cited in Massad 2007, p.4)

Strikingly, this demeaning image of French social conduct and morality (sexual and otherwise) stands in stark contrast with al-Jabarti's flattering portrayal of French dedication to learning.

Yet this goes to show the complex relationship between *epistemology* and *perceptions of sexual morality*. More importantly, it also highlights the *two-way* process in which perceptions of sexual otherness (polarising or otherwise) seem to have been *mutually* observed and recorded by scholars from both Europe and the Arabic-speaking East. As I shall point out in Chapter Four, Arab interest in recording and analysing European sexual mores continued well into the mid- and late- nineteenth century. Noticeably, it seems to have accompanied other general epistemological narratives depicting European social norms and culture. Egyptian educator, author and translator Rifa'ah al-Tahtawi (1801-1873), who was appointed as the Head of the School of Languages by Muhammad Ali, and who, in Abu-Lughod's words, was "[...] the moving spirit of the entire translation movement and, consequently, one of the most important figures in the nineteenth century's growing Arab awareness of the West" (2011, p.60) appears to have been particularly interested in a cross-cultural comparative analysis of Euro-Arab sexual mores. While on a sponsored learning expedition in France, al-Tahtawi kept a chronicle of his sojourn (Massad, p.31). He turned the

³⁷ The title translates as "The History of the Period of the French in Egypt"; however, the S Moreh's bi-lingually translated edition (1975) is entitled, "*Al-Jabarti's Chronicle of the First Seven Months of the French Occupation of Egypt*" (Massad 2007, p.4).

chronicle into a book, *Takhliṣ al-Ibriz fī Talkhīṣ Bariz* (1834),³⁸ upon advice from mentor, Shaykh Hasan al-Attar (1766-1835), so that it would “[...] remain as a guide for travelling to [France] for those seeking travel, especially so, as since the beginning of time until now, there [had] never appeared in the Arabic language anything about the history of the city of Paris [...] or about its conditions or the condition of its inhabitants” (cited in Massad, p.31).³⁹ The book is a collection of observations, some of which are comparative and are often judgementally presented. Al-Tahtawi seems to echo some of his predecessor’s (al-Jabarti’s) views particularly when it comes to French women (Massad, p.32): “Their [the French’s] men are slaves to their women and under their command, whether they are pretty or not [...] The Franks also do not suspect the worst in their women, although [the latter’s] lapses are many, as a man among them, even from their nobility, when his wife’s debauchery [...] is proved to him, he leaves her altogether, and separates from her forever” (cited in Massad, p.32). This anti-women rhetoric continues in al-Tahtawi’s narrative; he appears to analyse it comparatively offering a reasoning for it:

Among their worst traits: the dearth of chastity among many of their women [...] and the lack of jealousy among their men compared to the jealousy of Muslim men [...] how is this so when adultery [...] for them is a vice and a shame but not a primary sin/guilt [...], especially with regards to the unmarried man [...] Generally speaking, this city, like the rest of France’s cities and the rest of the great countries of the Franks [Europeans], is charged with abominations [...], innovations [...], and perdition [...], although the city of Paris is the wisest of the entire world and the home of world-based [...] science and is the French Athens. (cited in Massad, p.33)

So apart from “the lack of jealousy among [French] men”, al-Tahtawi decides later in the book that the ‘issue’ seems to be rooted in a ‘major error’ committed by French men; that is, “[...] handing over leadership to women [in their interactions with them]” (cited in Massad, p.33).

Epistemology and narrative orientations: a paradox?

It seems that both Egyptian scholars agree in their appreciation of French scholarship (while being simultaneously engaged in an epistemological narrative);⁴⁰ yet they also agree in their less-than-flattering view on French women. Indeed, both al-Jabarti’s and al-Tahtawi’s harsh criticisms targeted women and gender relations in their critique of French socio-sexual habits.

³⁸ The title of the book translates as “*The Extraction of Gold in Summarizing Paris*”. The book is based on al-Tahtawi’s sojourn in France in 1826 (Massad, p.31). The book will be revisited in Chapter Four.

³⁹ Interestingly, Massad points out that this advice comes from a sheikh (i.e. al-Attar) “who adores hearing about wondrous news and reading about strange traditions” (p.31). In addition, this very sheikh was also known for writing “love poetry about youthful boys” (p.31).

⁴⁰ It is significant that the two scholars’ observations about French socio-sexual conduct were made while they, not unlike Orientalists, were scrutinising ‘another’ culture and *producing narratives of epistemology* about the Other, as it were. I will come back to this point and highlight the subtle relationship that seems to link narratives of epistemology and sexuality.

Significantly, male-to-male homoerotic attraction, on the other hand, seems to have received a reaction of a different order altogether. In this regard, al-Tahtawi remarks the discrepancy between his culture and that of the French; he writes,

One of the better things among their traits, which truly resemble the traits of the Bedouins [Arab], is their lack of predilection for the love of male Juveniles or for writing rhapsodies for them, as this is one thing that is never mentioned among them and which their natures and morality reject. And, one of the better attributes of their language and poetry is its refusal of the flirtation of one kind with the same kind [jins]⁴¹, for it is not allowed in the French language for a man to say, 'I have fallen for a male juvenile [...]', as this is considered abhorrent speech [...] which is why if one of them translated one of our books, he would twist the words to say, 'I have fallen for a youthful girl', or he would get rid of the sentence altogether, as they see in this a corruption of morals, and they are right, as one of the two kinds [of people] has in those who are not of his kind a characteristic to which he is inclined just like the attraction of a magnet to iron, for example, or that of electricity to attract objects, and the like, as, if the same kind united, this characteristic would disappear, and it [this kind] would have departed from the natural state. For them, this would be one of the worst abominations [...], so much that they have rarely mentioned it openly in their books but rather eschew it as much as possible, and one never hears conversation about it in the first place. (cited in Massad, p.32)

Al-Tahtawi's comparative analysis above is crucially important on so many levels. Not only does it shed light on a strongly perceived 'difference' in the construction of sexual morality (literary and socially) on the part of the Arab scholar, but it also offers an interesting insight into the scholar's comparative judgement of the 'difference'. Already, the subtle appreciation of the European model of anti same-sex attraction is clear. Unlike his previous rather opinionated judgement on French women's conduct and their men's "lack of jealousy", al-Tahtawi's observation of French anti-pederastic literary attitude is somehow tinted with scholarly-like language as though to justify it and champion its logic. From appreciating the "better attributes" of the French "language and poetry", which do not allow this type of same-sex "flirtation", to championing such reasoning on pseudo-scientific grounds (by likening its logic to that of physics – "magnet" and "electricity"), al-Tahtawi even concludes by wrapping up the whole argument by determinedly referring to a supposed "natural state". Significantly, his references to science remind the reader of the *epistemological* nature and aims of his sojourn in Europe in the first place. Thus, not unlike European Orientalists travelling to the Arab East in order to study its culture and often remarking on the perceived 'difference' in its

⁴¹ As Massad points out (pp.32-33), the Arabic word, 'jins', now meaning 'sex'/'coitus', did not acquire this meaning until the twentieth century. Originally, the word meant 'kind' or 'type', hence Massad's choice of translating it in its historical context. Al-Tahtawi uses it to refer to the 'sexes' (male and female) as the two 'kinds/types' of people. See Massad's overview of the word's etymology in the third chapter in his book (2007).

sexuality, al-Tahtawi's observations seem to bear a degree of similarity with those of Orientalists; albeit, they are of a different order.

In this regard, Edward Said (2003) observes one of the differences between Orientalists who went East and Arab scholars who went to study in Europe in the nineteenth century. Said argues,

Leaving aside the fact that Western armies, consular corps, merchants, and scientific and archaeological expeditions were always going East, the number of travellers from the Islamic East to Europe between 1800 and 1900 is minuscule when compared with the number in the other direction. Moreover, the Eastern travellers in the West were there to learn from and to gape at an advanced culture; the purposes of the Western travellers in the Orient were, as we have seen, of quite a different order. (p. 204)

Yet, as we have seen in the example of al-Tahtawi,⁴² the fact that such "Eastern travellers" were engaged in epistemological pursuit had no deterring impact on their interest in European socio-sexual habits, which can be seen as a parallel practice to that which some Orientalists were engaged in whilst also studying the Arab East and scrutinising its culture. Nevertheless, the "different order", in which this cross-cultural mutual practice seems to have been carried out, may be interpreted in multiple ways. Whilst Arab scholars' nineteenth-century modern awareness of European culture had been translated into a surge of 'respect' and appreciation for European scholarship, which was yet to turn into a process of cultural assimilationism, European Orientalist interest in Arab Eastern culture varied in its manifestation and epistemological significance with the various Orientalists who visited and studied the region. Yet it would be safe to contend that scholars from both sides of the Euro-Arab divide were interested in a perceived 'difference'. However, this 'interest' had various manifestations and significations.

While Arab writers such as al-Jabarti and al-Tahtawi seem to have been interested in voicing their perception of a certain type of 'sexual difference', some Orientalists, as al-Tahtawi rightly points out, were rather uncomfortable with this 'difference', so much so that they suppressed it in their otherwise richly detailed observations and commentaries on Arab culture and literature. Of course, I am referring to perceptions of 'Other' (same-sex) sexuality, which many Orientalists wrongly assumed enjoyed a tolerated (if not legalised) status within Islam or Muslim society. Khaled El-Rouayheb (2005) demonstrates a perfect example of what al-Tahtawi referred to above; that is, the fact that when translating an Arabic literary work, some Orientalists would alter or refrain from conveying sections depicting *ghazal al-*

⁴² I will draw on further examples in Chapter Four when I discuss the cultural shift in Arab society in light of the nascent anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism.

mudhakkar (male-love). El-Rouayheb points out that “[a]t around the same time as Tahtawi was in Paris, the great British Arabist Edward Lane was in Egypt,⁴³ collecting material for his seminal *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. “Lane”, El-Rouayheb continues, “who also produced a heavily bowdlerized version of *The Arabian Nights*,⁴⁴ clearly considered pederasty to be an unmentionable vice, and had nothing to say about the phenomenon in his *Account*” (2005, p.16). Yet Lane did not shy away from depicting an overly sexualised image of Egypt, especially of Egyptian women and their alleged ‘lewdness’.⁴⁵ According to Hopwood, Lane was responsible for reaffirming English prejudices against Egyptian sexual mores (1999, pp.45-48). Allegedly, upon casting sight on Egypt for the first time, Lane wrote: “As I approached the shore, I felt like an Eastern bridegroom, about to lift the veil of his bride, and to see for the first time, the features which were to charm, or disappoint, or disgust him” (cited in Hopwood, p.46). The hetero-sexualised depiction of Lane’s ‘male’ persona and that of a ‘feminised’ Egypt becomes more extreme when juxtaposed with the Orientalist’s deliberate omission of narratives of homoeroticism (literary or otherwise) in his experiential and textual encounter with Egypt.⁴⁶

Contrary to Lane’s apparent lack of interest in Arabian homoeroticism, there have been Orientalists, such as Burton and Lawrence, whose textual and experiential interaction with the Arab East was clearly marked with a desire for epistemologically experiencing and reproducing knowledge about the very type of sexuality that the likes of Edward Lane thought “unmentionable”. In other words, for Burton and Lawrence, it was this very perception of sexual ‘difference’ that seems to have been at the heart of their Oriental ventures, for they were indeed seeking ‘difference’. Thus, more like al-Tahtawi than Lane, Burton and Lawrence’s comparative analysis of culture had same-sex desire at its heart. Paradoxically, however, some of the aims and purposes of Burton and Lawrence’s epistemological narratives on Eastern Arab sexuality appear to contradict the general direction of the intellectual mood in the Arab world. While elements of appreciation can be clearly detected in both Orientalists’ analyses of Arab sexuality, the Arab intelligentsia itself was becoming increasingly uncomfortable and uneasy *vis-à-vis* certain strands within its own cultural and literary heritage – thanks to the process of assimilationism within the Arab *Nahda*. Yet, ironically perhaps, the discursive motive of both

⁴³ Lane arrived in Egypt in September 1825, while al-Tahtawi was in Paris in 1826.

⁴⁴ As we will see in the next chapter, Edward Lane’s mid-nineteenth-century translation of *The Arabian Nights* was heavily bowdlerised. It was not until Burton’s late-nineteenth-century version that a full and complete account of all of the tales came into existence in European translation.

⁴⁵ Lane’s book, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, was published in 1836 by the Society for Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

⁴⁶ Indeed, this image becomes imperialistically politicised, too, as Lane seems to camouflage his (male) Western imperial identity with an adoptive Eastern one as though to acquire his ‘bride’, which is the whole country of Egypt. For a gender-based analysis of accounts Euro-Arab imperial (and sexual) encounters, see Hopwood (1999).

the Arab *Nahda*, on the one hand, and Burton and Lawrence on the other, has been largely and quintessentially *epistemological* in origin and motivation. Nonetheless, it is precisely the *orientation* of the scholarly narrative that the two camps seem to be at odds with. To put it simply, while nineteenth-and-twentieth-century Arab intellectuals of the *Nahda* movement were assimilating European values (Victorianism) to erode and minimise what had come to be regarded as a negative 'difference' (sexual and otherwise), our Orientalists (Burton and Lawrence) were escaping their European milieu in search for this very (desired) 'difference' in the Arab East. Evidently, each camp's general orientation has been textually documented highlighting the respective narrative of its epistemological pursuit.

The next chapter will shed light on Richard Burton's analysis of this perceived 'difference'. We will see how through the medium of translation, Burton manages to manipulate Arabian literary texts (depicting sexual otherness) and merges them with his own 'experiential-based' anthropological observations, so much so that the barrier between 'text' and 'experience' (or fiction and non-fiction) is considerably eroded. Nonetheless, Burton's approach to his reproduced perception of Arabian Other sexuality is distinctly epistemological, for he uses the Arab Orient as an 'illustrative tool' highlighting the possibilities for Other (textually and experientially 'proven') sexual realities. As for T. E. Lawrence, his history-changing relationship with the Arab Orient as well as his rendition of Arabian homoeroticism in the desert will be explored in Chapters Three and Four. I will show how Lawrence's relationship with the Arab East also has a distinctively epistemological basis. Indeed, Lawrence first went to the Levant in order to conduct research for his Oxford thesis on the Crusaders' citadels in Syria and Lebanon. Lawrence's initial historical encounter with the 'Unchanging Arab East' ended up with one of the most radical historic changes in the region. As I will explain in Chapter Four, the political change was, of course, accompanied (and paradoxically driven) by social and cultural changes. Indeed, the Arab *Nahda*, with its anti-Ottoman nationalist narrative and pro-European assimilationist cultural discourse, can be seen as both: the cultural/intellectual catalyst for the Arab Revolt and its political culmination at one and the same time. On the other hand, the Arab Revolt itself can be seen as the physical (experiential) manifestation of the ideological (political and intellectual) discourse of the Arab *Nahda* and anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism (brought together, partially at least, by Lawrence's Orientalist venture), as I will explain in Chapter Four.

As regards the perception of 'sexual difference' in Orientalist and Arab *Nahda* discourses,⁴⁷ there appears to be a 'timing-related' *paradox* that I would like to shed light on before I conclude. Dwelling on the nineteenth-century "process of westernisation" in the Arab world and the cross-culturally transmitted "cultural traits" or "items" at the time, Abu-Loghud (2011, p.23) refers to the important role "foreigners" played in implementing it; he writes,

When a cultural trait is being transmitted from one culture to another, the routes are often indirect. Many actors, or as we have termed them, 'cultural-carriers', may be involved, different ones at different stages of the transmission. Some are exogenous to the culture, foreigners who have direct contact with the native society. Some of these foreigners may unwittingly set an example which members of the indigenous society then attempt to emulate. Others may act more directly by introducing specific policies and institutions of foreign origin. Still others may influence, through education or other means, segments of the indigenous population who then translate what they have learned into specific changes in their own culture. (p.23)

If we accept that the change in the construction of sexual morality⁴⁸ in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Arab culture and literature has been largely the result of an assimilationist trend on the part of the Arab intelligentsia of the period (as argued by El-Rouayheb and Massad) as well as the general process of westernisation,⁴⁹ we can contend that, surely enough, Burton and Lawrence were not part of this change. Significantly, Burton and Lawrence's narratives on male-to-male Arab sexuality were not reflecting the conceptual critical shift evident in most of their contemporaneous Arab scholars' narratives. In fact, they had been quite at odds with most of them. Massad highlights the rapidly changing cultural attitudes towards allusions to homoerotic desire in Arabic literature. He points out the moral rationale of the sweeping changes that were taking place in Arabic literary discourse within a few decades from al-Tahtawi's comparative account on the 'difference' between European and Arab senses of literary sexual morality.⁵⁰ He explains how "[...] not only would surprise at the sexual desires of Europeans and frank discussion of the desires of the Arabs dissipate among Arab writers, but these bewildered views themselves would become surprising to later generations of the Arab intelligentsia" (p.35). By the turn of the nineteenth century, merely referring to medieval Arab sexual practices in intellectual discussions (even if disapprovingly)

⁴⁷ This is meant to be in relation to Burton's and Lawrence's Orientalisms specifically.

⁴⁸ That is, the process in which the subtle barrier between 'poetic expression' and 'carnal sin' had been eroded in *ghazal al-mudhakkkar* the Arabic poetic literary tradition that celebrated men's love for boys. Of course, the new construction of sexual morality, as will be further discussed in Chapter Four, resulted in the disappearance of the subgenre of poetry at the turn of the century and beyond.

⁴⁹ Of course, this process as well as the process through which the new construction of sexual morality in Arab culture had taken place will be revisited and discussed in detail in Chapter Four. This process will be analysed, compared and contrasted with Burton's (Chapter Two) and Lawrence's (Chapters Three and Four) representations of the Arab Orient and its assumed Other sexuality.

⁵⁰ Of course, al-Tahtawi was not the only Arab scholar to express such views. See Massad's Introductory Chapter for an overview of nineteenth-century Arab scholars' discussion of sexual matters (2007).

would give rise to severe condemnation and criticism on the part of Victorian-like Arab scholars; such explicit discussions became widely frowned upon and were deemed 'impolite' and 'inappropriate' (Massad, pp.35-36).⁵¹ By the mid-twentieth century, these very discussions from the previous century, including that of al-Tahtawi,⁵² were being viewed with such extreme scepticism as to doubt their very credibility in the first place (Massad, p.36).

Nonetheless, as Bleys argues, "[d]iscourse about male-to-male sexuality is pervaded by judgements that are either positive or negative, seldom neutral. Those men who fancied or pursued sexual relations with members of their own sex, not surprisingly perceived these relations differently from mainstream society, which was less embracing, if not homophobic" (1996, p.9). Whether Burton and Lawrence truly "fancied", or, indeed, willingly "pursued sexual relations with [Oriental] members of their own sex" may never be established with a degree of absolute certainty. However, what is clear, as we shall see over the coming chapters, is that the image of Oriental 'sexual difference' they textually and experientially sought and reproduced may have been, quite ironically, undergoing a layer of 'difference' of its own; that is, a 'difference', which would gradually render it closer and arguably more 'similar' to both Orientalists' background as far as 'matters sexual' are concerned.

If we accept Hyam's (1991) contention and Hopwood's (1999) argument,⁵³ that for the British "[s]exuality became the metaphor for geographical and cultural diversity" (Hopwood, p.16), we may want to examine how applicable it is in the particular cases of Burton and Lawrence and the specific type of sexual 'diversity' they were seeking, in relation to the critical *timing* of their Oriental ventures.⁵⁴ If 'geography' implied 'difference', (as it, indeed, did to many Orientalists in so many ways), we must then measure this perceived 'difference' *against* and *within* its own contextual temporal (and potentially fickle) cultural parameters – not merely against deeply entrenched existing 'perceptions' of otherness. For there may be a 'discrepancy' (or an 'incompatibility') between 'perception' and 'reality' that, in this particular

⁵¹ See Massad's citation and analysis of the historian Juri Zaydan's (1902) agitated reaction to Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq's *Al-Saq ala al-Saq [One Leg over Another]* (1855) in which he discussed the medieval Arabs' sexual practices. Despite the latter's disapproval of such practices (such as polygamy and taking concubines), Zaydan cannot justify al-Shidyaq's choice to even discuss or refer to such "bawdiness". He states that "[...] no man of letters could recite it [the book's expressions of bawdiness] without wishing that it had not occurred to our Shaykh [i.e. al-Shidyaq] and that he had not included it in his book in order to steer the pens of writers away from what cause a young man, not to mention a virgin [girl], to blush" (cited in Massad, p.36). This will be revisited in Chapter Two and compared with Burton's portrayal of Arab sexuality at the end of the nineteenth century.

⁵² See Massad's citation and analysis of Tawfiq al-Tawil's – a mid-twentieth-century historian – horror at al-Tahtawi's implied assumption that "sexual deviance" in France was not "an illness"; let alone it being "the natural thing" (Massad, p.36).

⁵³ In his introduction to *Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience* (1991), Ronald Hyam argues that "[...] sexual dynamics crucially underpinned the whole operation of British empire and Victorian expansion" (p.1).

⁵⁴ That is, the age of "transformation" as pointed out by Abu-Lughod above.

instance, can be seen in light of the subtle way in which pre-*Nahda* Arab literati seem to have distinguished 'text' from 'experience'.⁵⁵

In addition, we ought to pay attention to the highly paradoxical nature of narratives of epistemology depicting and critiquing sexuality inter- and intra-culturally. Just as certain Orientalists have chosen to narrate certain types of Arab sexualities (while ignoring others), certain Arab *Nahda* (and post-*Nahda*) scholars have, at various times, chosen to highlight certain narratives while suppressing others. Yet, it all takes place within a process of 'discursive epistemology' that is meant to narrate and produce 'knowledge' – not suppress it, hence the paradox. Personal preferences and/or prejudices may, of course, be part of this process, hence the inconsistency in the "positive" and "negative" judgements that "pervade" "male-to-male sexuality", as highlighted by Bleys above. However, putting personal narratives aside, we will see how perceptions of 'difference' in a certain locality – the Arab East in this instance – continue to resonate in Orientalist discourse regardless of whether (or not) they represent modern (or contemporary) realities. Critiquing the significance of 'geography' in European imperial discourse and following on from his quote above about the inconsistency in judgements of male-to-male sexuality, Bleys (1996) argues that this inconsistency or "incompatibility is reflected in the metaphoric juxtaposition of 'perversion' with 'desire'" (p.9). He continues, "[t]he word 'geography', in this context, must be interpreted equally as a metaphor for the strategies and discourses of, respectively, *stigmatisation* and *legitimisation* of same-sex relations, that were respectively hidden within either party's ethnographic argumentation" (p.9). Bleys's argument can indeed be applied to the complex cross-cultural analyses of sexuality in the specific and very particular context of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Euro-Arab cultural (and imperial) encounter.

As far as 'difference' is concerned, it remains problematically complex to measure, for the measurement needs be carried out and judged against a 'fixed' reality – rather than an entrenched 'perception'. At any rate, the undeniably clear achievement of this epistemologically oriented endeavour in search for 'difference' is the fact that its very perception or assumption of 'difference' seems to have, nonetheless, enabled Burton and Lawrence to textually (if not arguably experientially) express narratives of Other sexuality. In so doing, it has empowered them in ways that are distinctly 'different'. Quite ironically, this

⁵⁵ Of course, I am referring to Khaled El-Rouayheb's thesis (2009) here, which explains how pre-*Nahda* Arab writers distinguished between writing homoerotic literature and committing the actual sin of sodomy. Of course, the irony here emerges when we consider the fact that Burton's and Lawrence's contemporaneous (i.e. *Nahda*) Arab writers and critics would have been much less vocal and rather uncomfortable the depiction of homoeroticism in their literature. This perhaps justifies Burton's choice to translate medieval Arabic literature, as we will see in the next chapter.

seems to have happened at a time when literary 'difference' was supposedly being eroded. In this respect alone, Lawrence's and Burton's textual production has indeed managed to reconfigure the whole equation and turn it, once again, into "[u]ne orgie de différences"⁵⁶ of various and extremely complex sorts.

In the next chapter, I am going to explore certain aspects of Sir Richard Francis Burton's textual and experiential relationship with the Arab East. Famously known for his "plain and literal" translation of *The Arabian Nights*, Burton played a crucial role in exposing accounts of Oriental Other sexuality to his native Victorian audiences, and, thus, instigated an unprecedented debate on sexuality at home. Linguist, writer, translator, anthropologist, explorer and imperial officer, Burton combined rather unique qualities in an Orientalist whose knowledge of the Arab East was indeed manifested in both text and experience. Moreover, Burton's determination to uncover and often celebrate accounts of Oriental sexuality was a major contributor (and enhancer) to existing perceptions of Arab sexual and moral 'difference'. Nonetheless, Burton differs from many other Orientalists in that his narratives about Oriental Arab sexuality were essentially epistemological rather than judgemental in inclination. Burton's interest in Arab sexuality took a scholarly perspective, which discursively drew on Oriental-Arab literary sources as well as his own first-hand experiential knowledge of certain parts of the Arab East, its language and culture. More importantly, Burton's tone in his accounts on Arab sexuality is generally defiant against what he perceived as Victorian Grundyism and hypocrisy towards sexual matters and morality. In contrast, he seems to celebrate Eastern 'frankness' and 'openness' in sexual discourse. As we will see, Burton used his sexually explicit translations of medieval Arab works to juxtapose them with what he perceived as the hypocrisy and Grundyism of Victorian society towards sexual matters and morality. While Burton's translations managed indeed to accentuate the existing perception of 'difference' in moral attitudes towards the depiction of sexuality in literature between the European and Arab societies, they seemed less keen on exploring contemporary Arab attitudes towards such matters.

The next chapter aims to throw light on the dynamics of Burton's textual, experiential and largely *translational* relationship with the Arab Orient. The first part of the chapter analyses Burton's "Foreword" to his translation of *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night* (1886) as well as certain sections of his "Terminal Essay". This will then be followed by an analysis of Burton's 'dual subjectivity' (as an Englishmen and an Arab), on which he seems to

⁵⁶ Jean Baudrillard's expression (cited in Bleys 1996, p.1).

have relied in order to produce and argue his epistemological narratives about Eastern enlightenment (sexual and otherwise). This will be achieved by examining the various layers of cross-cultural masquerade involved in Burton's complex production of *The Kasidah* (1880) as well as his translation of *The Perfumed Garden* (1886) and his attempt to find its original Arabic manuscript, *The Scented Garden*, in order to disclose the work's alleged account on pederasty. An allusion will be made to the irony involved in Burton's literary pilgrimage to the Arab East in order to translate medieval – *not contemporary* – accounts depicting Arab sexuality whilst Burton's contemporary Arab scholars were paradoxically translating European scholarship, which contributed to the cultural and literary shift in the construction of sexual morality in the Arab world on the eve of modernity. I am going to highlight the *translational* and *transitional* aspect of the shift at this particular period whereby scholars from both societies (Britain and the Arab world) appear to have been simultaneously engaged in producing epistemological narratives of 'difference' concerning each other's sexual morality. The chapter concludes in discussing Burton's lasting legacy and his impact on other fellow Orientalists, who followed in his footsteps; this will lead to introducing T. E. Lawrence, the subject of the following chapter.

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Chapter Two:

**Arabian Pleasures From Text to
Experience**

Sir Richard Francis Burton: an *Other* approach to knowledge

Born in Torquay in 1821 (Brodie 1971, p.21), Sir Richard Francis Burton was a few months old when his family moved to Tours in France where he spent the first nine years of his life (Brodie, p.30). The Burtons resided in a small chateau, the Beauséjour, on the right bank of the Loire, where “[t]here were horses and dogs, snail-hunting and picnicking” and near-by fine patisserie shops (Brodie, p.31). Later on, the family embarked on a succession of moves – fourteen in ten years – that would include a brief settlement in England in 1830 before Burton’s father’s passion for continental life drove him back to the Continent (Brodie, pp.34-36). Young Burton wandered with his family between France and Italy until he was nineteen years old, whereby, upon his father’s decision (and against his own will),⁵⁷ Burton was to be sent back to England to go to Oxford. As Brodie argues, this “incessant wandering [...] would scar him [Burton] in a special fashion for life” (p.34). Brodie highlights the impact of Burton’s continental life on certain important events in his life as well as his general attitude towards England. To begin with, the Burtons (especially the father and the children) preferred life on the Continent; Burton wrote, “we never thoroughly understood English society, nor did society understand us” (cited in Brodie, p.37). He also stated that “England is the only country where I never felt at home” (cited in Brodie, p.37). In this regard, Brodie argues that Burton “[...] grew up [...] lacking any strong sense of national identity, counting himself, as he put it, ‘a waif, a stray ... a blaze of light, without a focus’” (p.37).

One of the main differences that marked Burton’s childhood out from his peers’ back in England is his schooling and education. Burton never had a traditional schooling because of his family’s nomadic-like wandering. For the most part of his childhood, Burton was assigned a governess and a tutor (Brodie, p.40).⁵⁸ Despite its unorthodoxy, which would be further highlighted later at Oxford, Burton’s education was by no means inadequate. For “Richard [...] emerge[d] from these years with a precocious cosmopolitanism – a familiarity with European art, architecture, and geography gained first-hand, an intimate knowledge of social behaviour in half the provinces of Italy and France, and an unusually explicit schooling in sexual matters learned mostly from Italian medical students” (Brodie, p.40). Thus, from the beginning, Burton’s approach to knowledge had combined an element of *first-hand experience*. For Burton’s education was characteristically experiential in that much of the knowledge he gained

⁵⁷ “Burton begged to go to the university in Toulouse” (Brodie, p.44). The prospect of going back to England was very daunting for Burton.

⁵⁸ Burton’s private tutor, H.R. DuPré, was a young Oxford graduate, who travelled with the family; Burton and his brother, Edward, never liked the tutor and associated his beatings (along with their father’s as well as the beatings they received in their English preparatory school while they were briefly in England) with England, which came to represent punishment (Brodie, p.40).

involved a remarkably practical (not merely textual) approach. Brodie shows how in Florence, for example, Burton became a “walking catalogue of art” and how his visits to churches, palazzos and ruins in Rome were filled with “peculiar ardour” (p.39). Burton also learnt how to swim, dance, shoot and play chess (p.39). More importantly, he developed a passion for fencing and “[...] became, eventually, one of the outstanding swordsmen of Europe” (p.39). This was to have the greatest impact on highlighting his extraordinary linguistic talent. Not only did Burton have two mother tongues (English and French) (Grant 2009, p.79), but, as Brodie points out, “he” also “developed [...] a flawless ear for French dialects as his family moved ever southwards” (p.41). While travelling with his family in Europe, young Burton managed to devise a method,⁵⁹ which enabled him to pick up and learn an impressive array of languages and dialects, including Bernais, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, and German as well as the Neapolitan dialect (Brodie, p.41).

Burton’s extraordinary linguistic ability, which distinguished his epistemological approach from his peers’ at Oxford,⁶⁰ was nevertheless to contribute to his ‘failure’ at adapting to the English educational system, which eventually resulted in his expulsion from the University.⁶¹ Quite ironically, Burton’s unmatched grasp of Greek and Latin was the beginning of his clash with not only the British pedagogical approach to the classical languages, but also to the British, Anglo-centric approaches to epistemology in general. Urged by his father to try for a fellowship at Oxford, Burton’s application was unjustly turned down (Brodie, p.47). However, as Brodie argues, the failure did not result from any “defects” in his linguistic abilities, but, ironically, “from the very superiority of his education and talent” (p.47). Brodie continues,

Burton could not only read and translate ancient Greek, he could also speak some modern Greek, which he had learned from Greek merchants during a sojourn in Marseilles. This he could not resist demonstrating during the examination. ‘The devil palpably entered into me and made me speak Greek Romaically by accent, and not by quantity, even as they did and still do at Athens,’ he said. But the examiners, instead of being impressed by his linguistic ability, saw only gross errors of pronunciation”. (p.47)

⁵⁹ See Brodie (pp.49-50) for Burton’s own summary of his language learning/acquisition technique.

⁶⁰ Brodie argues, “[...] having never been in a proper school, Burton had no experience measuring himself scholastically against his fellows. He possessed conviction but no proof of his superiority” (p.47).

⁶¹ As Brodie points out, Burton “immediately established a reputation for irreverence and rebellion” when he “settled in Trinity College”; he was also known for his excellent skills as a fencer and boxer (p.45). Burton was then to become increasingly popular for his “wit and high spirits”; however, much of his rebellion was targeted towards the dons until one day he “deliberately planned to get himself rusticated [...], not expelled” (Brodie, pp.50-51). Yet it all went wrong and he was eventually expelled – more for his defiance than the actual offences he committed; for “the dons felt that to ‘commit a crime and to declare it a virtuous action’ was arrogance beyond condoning” (pp.50-51). See Brodie (pp.50-51) for more details on the incident.

Moreover, when Burton “[...] went on to converse in ‘Roman Latin – real Latin’ instead of the anachronistic Anglicized Latin taught only in Britain and understood only by Englishmen [...] the dons laughed at him”,⁶² hence Burton’s failure to win the fellowship, which “[...] went instead to a an inferior student” (Brodie, p.47). Burton’s rage at this incident was translated into contempt at Oxford’s “philology”, which, he thought, was “ridiculous”; this, coupled with other incidents of corruption and discrimination,⁶³ prompted Burton to move away from competing “with undistinguished and mediocre men in conventional fields” (pp.48-49).⁶⁴ However, Burton did not move away completely from the field of his greatest talent, linguistics; instead, he turned towards the more “exotic tongue [of] Arabic” (Brodie, p.48), which he once described as “a faithful wife following the mind and giving birth to its offspring” (cited in Brodie, p.57).

It is significant that Burton refused to adapt to the existing philological system of his time (concerning Greek and Latin) and that his rejection of these systems with their imperial significations⁶⁵ was manifested in his adoption of an Eastern tongue, which he largely taught himself using his very own methodology,⁶⁶ only to become one of the greatest Arabists,⁶⁷ “whose name would [...] reign over all others as translator and propagandist for the literature of the East” (Brodie, p.49). Moreover, Burton’s metaphorical betrothal to the Arabic language can be seen as an articulation of his divorce from England and its imperial languages, whose versions he did not speak and adamantly refused to learn.⁶⁸ Indeed, even when Burton

⁶² Brodie points out that Anglicised Latin was “a remnant of an old distinction between Protestants and Catholics” (p.47). Ironically, however, Burton’s “true Roman Latin pronunciation would eventually be adopted in all British schools” (p.47).

⁶³ Burton saw how sons of noblemen, who were “distinguished from others by the gold tufts on their mortar board hats”, were “granted academic honours almost automatically” (Brodie, p.48).

⁶⁴ However, Burton was to return to translating Latin poetry shortly before his death. Norman Vance (1997) indicates that Burton and Leonard Smithers were jointly working on a translation of Catullus “whose ‘coarser passions’ disgusted his more sensitive Victorian translators and commentators”; the translation was unfinished by the time Burton died in 1890 (pp.127-8).

⁶⁵ Highlighting the imperial significance of Latin and Greek for the Victorians, Norman Vance (1997) quotes “An Eton master is reputed to have told his class that they could not expect to be men of taste and succeed in the world if they did not master longs and shorts (elegiac couplets, the verse form favoured by Ovid etc.) [...] even those who intended to serve the Empire in India had the opportunity first to demonstrate their competence in verse composition” (p.13).

⁶⁶ Oxford did not offer Arabic classes for undergraduates; however, Burton managed to get some initial help from a “friendly Spanish Arabist, Don Pascual de Gayangos” who helped him with the letters (Brodie, p.48). Burton was then quick to develop his own acquisitive technique, which he may have started using it unconsciously as he picked up languages in Europe; Burton would later use this technique to learn new languages in India (Brodie, p.49). See Brodie (pp.49-50) for Burton’s own summary of this technique.

⁶⁷ As Brodie shows, Burton “Eventually [...] became one of the three or four great linguists of his time, mastering in the end twenty-nine languages and enough dialects to add up to more than forty” (p.57).

⁶⁸ Burton’s clash with the British epistemological institution appears to have a *methodological* dimension too. Vance (1997) shows how “The most obvious nurseries of this flourishing classicism were the great public schools and Oxford and Cambridge. But the pedagogical emphasis [...] was on mental discipline and the cultivation of taste rather than [...] historical or literary scholarship. Mandell Creighton, Bishop of London wrote in a letter to his son in 1888: ‘the reason why boys are taught Latin and Greek is because learning these languages is the best exercise in carefulness, attention, accuracy, quickness of perception and such like qualities’” (p.13). As we have seen, Burton’s learning methodology differs from this model significantly as it is largely self- and experiential-based.

returned half-heartedly to Oxford in 1850 to finish his degree, he realised that “[...] the idea came too late. I had given myself up to Oriental studies, and I had begun to write books” (Brodie, pp.51-52).

Burton’s Oriental-based authorship certifies his epistemological authority, so much so it renders an Oxford degree (or certification) redundant. Nonetheless, Burton’s embracing of Arabic was not merely a pedagogically linguistic passion; it gave birth to his larger Orientalist (literary and anthropological) scholarship, and eventually his *magnum opus*, the first complete and unexpurgated translation of the *Arabian Nights*. More importantly, as we will see, Burton’s command and application of Arabic was not merely put to linguistic-translational use; Arabic was Burton’s *language of choice* to express and communicate certain ideologies to his Victorian society via (and under the ‘safe’ disguise of) the medium of translation. I am referring to Burton’s scholarship on sexuality and sexual morality, whose Eastern origins were Burton’s particular point of departure as well as the source of much of the debate on sexuality towards the end of the nineteenth century.⁶⁹

Thus, Burton’s childhood ‘difference’ (epistemological and otherwise) was further enhanced by his adoption of this “[un]conventional field”, whose otherness would only lend support to validating his scholarly methodology, in which he achieved outstanding success. For Burton’s Orientalism was characteristically and wholly epistemological in that it was an approach to knowledge *about* and *from* the East. Indeed, Burton’s own knighthood,⁷⁰ an *imperial testimony* to his scholarship, was awarded to him for his translation of the *Arabian Nights*. So if Burton’s ‘difference’ was not academically recognised or certified as a potential for (imperial) success by Oxford, Burton would eventually get Empire itself, to attest and validate his very own approach to the East; that is, his Orientalism.

⁶⁹ Of course, Burton’s translational scholarship on sexuality and ‘pillow-books’ started with Eastern non-Arabic erotica sources, the most famous of which is the *Ananga Ranga*, a Sanskrit love manual written in the fifteenth or sixteenth century by the poet Kalyan Mall, and Vatsayana’s *Kama Sutra*, an erotic love manual written between the first and fourth centuries. Both translations, among others, were published by the Kama Shastra Society of London and Benares, an imaginary publishing house that was set up by Burton and Foster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot in 1882. It is worth noting that both translations were accomplished with the help of Indian scholars and pundits, who probably did most of the actual translational work. See Brodie (pp.367-379) for more details on Burton’s translational work on Eastern erotica. Of course, Burton’s association with the translation of the *Kama Sutra* and the work’s popularity in English have contributed to his fame and notoriety when it comes to ‘matters sexual’. However, for the purpose of this study, I focus on Burton’s translation of Arabic erotica; specifically, on the association he appears to make between Arabic and accounts on ‘pederasty’ and male-to-male sexuality. *The Perfumed Garden* is Burton’s third publication by the Kama Shastra Society. The fifteenth-century Arabic sex manual would gain further notoriety and mystery after Burton tried to retrieve an alleged missing chapter on pederasty, as we will see later on in this chapter. Noticeably, *The Perfumed Garden* is deemed to be “even more pornographic than *Ananga Ranga* or the *Kama Sutra*” (Brodie, p.377).

⁷⁰ Burton was made “Knight Commander of St Michael and St George”; he received the news in a letter on 5 February 1886 (Brodie, p.395). Colligan (2006) points out that Burton received his knighthood for his translation of *The Arabian Nights* (p.56).

In this chapter, I am going to draw on a selection of texts from Burton's Orientalist scholarship and point out how Burton's 'Other' approach to knowledge, which started off in his childhood, was empowered by drawing on Oriental-Arab (Other) literary sources. I would like to show how Burton's unique epistemological approach to the Arab East, which combined linguistic and literary knowledge of 'text' as well as first-hand exploratory, anthropological and geographical 'experience', endowed much of his discourse on sexuality with a lasting legacy that inspired other fellow Orientalists to follow in his footsteps. Above all, Burton's Orientalism seems to manipulate the relationship between 'text' and 'experience' (or fiction and fact) in that it discursively conflates the two. In so doing, Burton draws attention to the potentially anti-mimetic capabilities of Orientalism and the Orient as a space of possibilities.

Burton's *Arabian Nights*: a displacement of sorts

In her introduction to a recent selection of tales from Burton's translation, A S Byatt (2001) observes that "In British Romantic poetry the *Arabian Nights* stood for the wonderful against the mundane, the imaginative against the prosaically and reductively rational" (p.xvii). She shows how *The Nights* influenced the childhoods of Wordsworth and Coleridge as well as that of Charles Dickens;⁷¹ for all of them the classic symbolised an escapist dream world and a source of early literary inspiration (2001, p.xvii). We have also seen *The Nights*' talismanic effect on William Beckford, which resulted in a remarkable piece of Orientalist literature, *Vathek*, which, as pointed out in the previous chapter, had been dubbed the "thousand and second night". For Warner (2011), *The Arabian Nights* allowed writers such as Beckford to project "[...] on to a fantasy Orient [...]" (p.28). She argues that the Oriental classic "offered a space for psychological non-conformism [...]", hence "Beckford's supercharged imagination [which] fills *Vathek* and many other lesser-known tales [...]" (pp.28-29).

Nonetheless, the rather 'benevolent' perception of *The Nights*' fantastical and inspirational powers was yet to undergo a radical change in the wake of the heated debate over sexual morality, which was caused by Burton's publication of the text's first unexpurgated translation in any European language between 1886-1888. Burton's "plain and literal" translation⁷² was a unique addition to the text's numerous translated editions.⁷³ One

⁷¹ Warner (2011) notes that "[t]he 1817 version of the 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner', for example, strikes the same cold thrill as the *Nights* because it too conveys 'the inadequacy of human morality to comprehend the world in which we love'" (p.21).

⁷² The full title of the complete translation is: *A Plain and Literal Translation of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, Now Entitled The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, 10 vols. (Benares, India, 1885-86), and *Supplemental Nights to The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night*, 6 vols. (Benares, India, 1886-88).

⁷³ *The Nights* was first translated into French (and indeed any European language) by Antoine Galland (1646-1715) between 1704-1711. Galland, however, did not translate all the tales and deliberately missed out what he deemed

reviewer from the *Bat* (29th September 1885) acknowledges the dramatic shift in Burton's translation "from what Galland and Lane had presented to the West as 'the playbook of generations, the delight of the nursery and the school-room for nearly two hundred years'" (Colligan 2006, p.65). For, unlike most of its predecessors, Burton's translation would shift the focus and retrieve the original text's (often explicit) depiction of sexuality. It would also establish a connection between the *text* and the *context*, and, thus endow the literary classic with an anthropological quality. In Colligan's (2006) words, Burton's translation "emphasised [the] Arab origin and sexual content" of the work, despite its previous (subtle) "exotic and sexual appeal in Britain" (p.59). Burton's translation used the *text* to foreshadow the translator's interest and epistemological investment in the *context*. Not only did it bring the text's Oriental background to the foreground, but it also enabled a more vivid perception of Arabian sexual otherness that was now to extend from the realm of the literary/fantastical to that of the experiential/anthropological.

Precisely, Burton's 'Other' translation was an act of *double displacement: thematic and generic*. Firstly, what sets Burton's version apart from its predecessors is "[...] its determination to include material that previous translators had considered offensive to Western readers and to explain its ethnographic significance in extensive, unexpurgated footnotes" (Kennedy 2000, p.324). As Colligan (2006) argues, "In effect, he [Burton] defamiliarised the Arab text that had been virtually adopted by British culture as its own. His translation violently disrupted the British cultural presentation of the *Arabian Nights* – to such an extent that it was branded 'pornographic'" (p.59). Indeed, the term 'pornography', itself, was first "introduce[d] [...] into literary criticism, popular culture, and legislation" in the wake of "[...] Burton's *Arabian Nights*" which also "incited the *first* public literary debates about 'pornography' in England" (Colligan, p.57).⁷⁴ To that effect, it is not surprising perhaps that Stanley Lane-Poole's criticism of Burton's edition of the literary classic's numerous translations should famously conclude

as the overly explicit ones. In addition, it is also believed that he may have also introduced some of the tales from other oral and written sources, which were retranslated back into Arabic (Byatt 2001, pp.xiv-xv). Various English translations followed in the nineteenth century, the most prominent of which are Edward Lane's heavily bowdlerised translation (1839-1841), Thomas Dalziel's illustrated edition (1863-1865) and John Payne's complete and scholarly version (1882-1884); see Colligan (2006, p.58). However, even Payne's "complete" translation did not contain all the tales, which Burton's did. Payne's was seventy-eight stories shorter than Burton's (Kennedy 2000, p.324). At any rate, it took the work nearly two centuries to appear in its entirety in a European language, thanks to Burton's "plain and literal" translation, which also included a body of rich commentary and a "Terminal Essay".

⁷⁴ Of course, the term 'pornography', which originally meant 'writing about prostitutes', was first coined in the mid nineteenth century. However, as Marcus Wood (2002) argues pornographic narratives can be detected beyond the 'official' definition of what constitutes them at any given time (91). He shows how representations of the black body and slavery in the eighteenth century, for example, were classified under travel literature and other genres, despite the strong sexualised imagery in such accounts. Burton's contribution to pornographic discourse in literature will be revisited and discussed in further detail later in this chapter; this will be done in light of Marcus Woods's work (2002) on historical narratives of pornography. The theme of literary pornography will be addressed again in Lawrence's work, which will be juxtaposed with Burton's in Chapter Four.

that:⁷⁵ “Galland [is] for the nursery, Lane for the library, Payne for the study, and Burton for the sewers” (cited in Colligan, p.66). The newly exposed explicit sexuality of Burton’s edition of *The Nights* appears to have displaced the literary text *thematically*; what had, for nearly two hundred years, been largely perceived as children’s literature was now being “branded as ‘pornographic’”, hence the first act of displacement.

It must be noted, however, the debates surrounding Burton’s private publication⁷⁶ of the book varied tremendously between those who accused him of “laboriously import[ing] the gigantic muck heaps of other races” from the “Mohammedan East”⁷⁷ and those who saw “nothing intentionally demoralizing” (Colligan 2006, p.64).⁷⁸ Colligan (2006) and Kennedy (2000) provide an overview of the sharp polarisation in the reviews of Burton’s publication. Both writers reflect on the significance of Burton’s translation as well as the debates that ensued from it in terms of what they said about Britain’s perception of its own sexual morality *vis-à-vis* the Arabs’. From her side, Colligan argues that despite their scholarly and linguistic value, Burton’s “[...] translations of Arab texts were creative productions that disclosed more about contemporary British sexual preoccupations than they did about Arab sexuality” (p.57). As for the significance of the “discourses that emerged around these translations”, Colligan observes that they “were underscored by an overwhelming and pervasive preoccupation with the idea of British sexual inadequacy” (p.58). On the other hand, Kennedy highlights the “competing uses of Orientalism” which framed “the controversy created by the publication of Burton’s *Nights*” (p.310). He draws on Burton’s own critique of the “grotesque Orientalism [that is] drawn from the depths of European self-consciousness” and shows how, ironically, despite Burton’s “intellectual odyssey” for distinction, his “preoccupations” and those of his various reviewers were all largely drawn from a European self-consciousness despite the wide range of their “intentions, convictions and competing agendas” (p.339).

Yet, how did Burton’s new translation of a familiar *literary* text manage to stir up heated debates not only about the sexual morality of the ‘Other’ races depicted in the book, but also about Britain’s own sexual-moral image? Burton’s use and manipulation of

⁷⁵ Stanley Lane-Poole was the great-nephew of Edward Lane (Colligan, p.64), one of the main translators of *The Arabian Nights* in the nineteenth century.

⁷⁶ It is significant that these debates ensued despite the private and costly nature of the work’s release and circulation. “From 1885-6, he privately printed through the Kama Sutra Society 1000 copies of his own ten-volume translation entitled *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night* and sold the set to subscribers for a prohibitive ten guineas (Colligan, p.58).

⁷⁷ From John Morley’s ‘The Ethics of Dirt’, an article attacking Burton’s translation that appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on the 29th of September 1885. See Colligan (pp.63-71) for a review of the various responses to *The Nights* in the press after its publication.

⁷⁸ The first review of *The Nights* from the *Standard* on the 12th of September 1885; this was a positive review.

Orientalism may offer an answer. For the controversy that ensued was not merely about Burton's retrieval of the text's original literary sexuality. As Colligan rightly points out,

It was in his footnotes [...] that Burton's translation especially set itself apart from other translations. These footnotes, accompanied by a full scholarly apparatus (Foreword, Terminal Essay, Appendix and Index), offered, in the words of Mahsin Jassim Ali, a 'panorama of Eastern Life' that incorporated strange anthropological observations on Arab practices such as bestiality, sodomy, eunuchism, clitoridectomy, and miscegenation. (Colligan, p.58)

In fact, the very *structure* in which Burton presents his book is as important as the translation itself. While Burton's Foreword sets the tone of the whole text and subtly dismantles the barrier between fact and fiction in the East, his "Terminal Essay", a piece of *anthropological* literature, reconfigures the significance of the translated literary text and renders it subservient to Burton's purpose to discuss sexuality, not only in the Orient, but also in Europe and at home in England. In order to achieve this effect of inter-textual transposition, Burton draws on his authority in the Orient in general and in Arabia in particular.⁷⁹

From the very beginning in his Foreword, Burton justifies his translation on the basis of having been on Hajj in 1853; he writes, "It may be permitted me also to note that this translation is a natural outcome of my Pilgrimage to Al-Medhinah and Meccah" (Burton 1886 vol.1, p.ix). Burton's strategic reference to his experiential knowledge – not merely textual or linguistic – endows his narrative with an added sense of value, which he appears to exploit to such an extent that his translation of the literary text becomes purposely imbued with his anthropological notes. This, I argue, *displaces* the supposedly *literary* nature of the popular Arabic classic and turns it into an *anthropological* window on Eastern life (sexual and otherwise), hence the *generic displacement* of the text (from fictional to anthropological literature).

In what follows, I am going to highlight a selection of passages from Burton's Foreword and the section on 'Pederasty' in his "Terminal Essay" in order to demonstrate the discursive functionality of his narrative structure. To begin with, Burton's Foreword lays out a range of important scholarly observations that set out certain expectations concerning the nature, purpose and significance of his work. From ambiguously conflating the fictional and the factual to clearly emphasising the scholarly value of his notes, Burton manages to create a stylistic

⁷⁹ In his capacity as an imperial agent, Burton travelled and lived in various parts of the Orient including India and the Middle East. As I will show later in this chapter, Burton occasionally resorted to oriental disguise in certain episode of his interaction with the Orient. Abdullah of Bushire was to become Burton's Muslim-Oriental persona, under whose disguise he also famously went on Hajj in 1853. A reproduction of *The Pilgrim*, an anonymous illustration of Hajji Abdullah, can be seen on p.69 in this thesis (Figure 2).

pattern, which would be reinforced and expanded upon later in his “Terminal Essay”. Primarily, the aim of Burton’s Foreword is to highlight the crucial intersections where the sexual, moral and imperial values of his epistemological endeavour converge. It also signposts his methodology and foreshadows his interest in revisiting and debating sexual morality in the “Terminal Essay”.

As for the methodology, Burton explains it adequately (1886 vol.1, pp. ix-xiii); he shows how his differs from his predecessors’ not only in form and content,⁸⁰ but also in purpose. Burton explains how his version is meant to “show what ‘The Thousand Nights and a Night’ really is. Not, however, for reasons to be more fully stated in the terminal Essay, by straining *verbum reddere verbo*, but by writing as the Arab would have written in English [...]. My work claims to be a faithful copy of the great Eastern-saga book, by preserving intact, not only the spirit, but even the *mécanique*, the matter and the manner ” (1886 vol.1, p.xiii).

It is significant that Burton’s rationale for his work appears to combine an emphasis on his linguistic abilities as well as style and “*mécanique*”. Importantly, Burton’s claim of ‘authenticity’ is made in the backdrop of the rather ambiguous opening of the Foreword. In the first paragraph of the Foreword, Burton dwells on popular perceptions of the “*talismanic*” powers of *The Nights*, which were his “unfailing source of solace and satisfaction” during what would otherwise have been a “laborious” job (i.e. the act of translating the work) (p.vii). While the bewitching nature of the literary text may be all too familiar to the British reader, the *land* of the Arabian tales may not hold quite the same resonance. Yet, for Burton, it is “Impossible even to open the pages without a vision starting into view; without drawing a picture from the pinacothek of the brain; without reviving a host of memories and reminiscences which are not the common property of travellers, however widely they may have travelled” (p.vii). Subtly, Burton appears to be setting the parameters of his distinction; that is, his combined knowledge of Arab ‘text’ and ‘context’.

The romantic tone of the opening paragraph continues and creates an air of mystery as to whether Burton’s narrative is imaginary, metaphorical or even anecdotal. He continues to relate how “[...] the Jinns bore me at once to the land of my predilection, Arabia, a region so familiar to my mind that even at first sight, it seemed a reminiscence of some by-gone metempsychic life in the distant Past” (p.vii). Burton’s first-hand knowledge of Arabia and Islam is the main pillar of his authority. Yet, to romantically juxtapose it with a reference to the

⁸⁰ See (pp.x-xiii) in the Foreword for Burton’s review of his predecessors’ translations and his critique of the form, content and style.

mythical “Jinns” may somehow seem compromisingly subversive. However, it is precisely this narrative device of ‘casual juxtaposition’ that appears to serve his purpose of conflating fact and fiction in his approach to Arabia. This narrative continues in typical *Nights*-style, where Burton portrays a beautiful scene inspired by the familiar text (p.vii). Abruptly, however, Burton announces a “shift of scene” and the reader is presented with another Burton⁸¹ – not the English translator but the Arab “*Ràwi*”, or storyteller – who, sitting by “camp-fire” in the desert, is surrounded by Arabs (sheikhs, women and children) whose hospitality he is repaying by (*re*)telling them “a few pages of their favourite tales” (p.viii). Vividly describing the setting, Burton writes, “The women and children stand motionless as silhouettes outside the ring; and all are breathless with attention; they seem to drink in the words with eyes and mouths as well as with ears. The most fantastic flights of fancy, the widest improbabilities, the most impossible of impossibilities, appear to them utterly natural, mere matters of every-day occurrence” (p.viii).

Burton’s narration of the scene continues depicting the amusement of the Arabs and echoing their utterances of exclamation:

They enter thoroughly into each phase of feeling touched upon by the author [...] and, despite their normal solemnity and the impassibility, all roar with laughter, sometimes rolling upon the ground till the reader’s gravity is surely tried [...]. To this magnetising mood the sole exception is when a Badawi of superior accomplishments, who sometimes says his prayers, ejaculates a startling ‘*Astaghfaru’llah*’ – I pray Allah’s pardon! – for listening, not to Carlyle’s ‘downright lies,’ but to light mention of the sex whose name is never heard amongst the nobility of the Desert (pp. viii-ix)

Suddenly, however, Burton breaks it to the reader that “It may be permitted me also to note that this translation is a natural outcome of my Pilgrimage to Al-Medhinah and Meccah” (Burton 1886 vol.1, p.ix). The scene in which Burton depicts himself as an Arab “*Ràwi*” is significant. It positions him intrinsically *within* the *text* and *context*. Thus, Burton is indirectly reminding his reader that he is not merely ‘another’ translator of the classic; he is a translator, narrator, commentator, critic and orator. Essentially, Burton becomes a *double storyteller*; for, unlike other translators, he is admittedly engaged in act of telling and retelling tales to his Arab and British audiences alike, hence his compound role as a *double Ràwi*.⁸² His approach and methodology are different. The latter, his methodology, is already foreshadowed in the first page of his work revealing the overall structure. The very narrative ambiguity of the nature of the “*Ràwi*” scene (fictional or factual?) represents much of Burton’s deliberate conflation of

⁸¹ Burton’s Oriental persona, Abdullah of Bushire, will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

⁸² Burton’s role as a double *Ràwi* will be further analysed and compared Scheherazade’s, the original *Ràwiya* (female storyteller) of the Arabian Nights, later in this chapter.

‘text’ and ‘experience’ throughout the rest of his book. Importantly, this stylistic-based conflation is also functional. Effortlessly, Burton manages to set the tone and make his first few points by invoking his Hajj-based authority. One of the supportive reviews of Burton’s version of *The Nights* drew “attention to [his] covert pilgrimage to Mecca disguised as a ‘True Believer’, [...]” by way of endowing his narrative with the befitting authority of that of “an upstanding English gentleman [who is] fit to translate a British classic” (cited in Colligan, p.66).

Discussing the benefit of his Arab-related knowledge with his ‘equally knowledgeable’ friend, Dr John Steinhaeuser in Aden in 1852,⁸³ Burton explains how, “[...] when talking over Arabia and the Arabs, we at once came to the same conclusion that, while the name of this wondrous treasury of Moslem folk-lore is familiar to almost every English child, no general reader is aware of the valuables it contains, nor indeed will the door open to any but Arabists” (p.ix). Burton’s narrative seems to derive its power from paradoxically de-familiarising the familiar; it relies on a point of commonality, shared with the reader, only to turn it on its head, and, thus, justify its rationale.

Having undermined and displaced (part of) the longstanding significance of the literary text in the collective British psyche, Burton goes on to spell out the *epistemological narrative* of his intellectual pursuit; namely, using the literary text as a point of access to the anthropological and social context. He begins,

Explanatory notes did not enter into Mr Payne’s plan.⁸⁴ They do with mine: I can hardly imagine *The Nights* being read to any profit by men of the West without commentary. [...] The accidents of my life, it may be said without undue presumption, my long dealings with Arabs and other Mahommedans, and my familiarity not only with their idiom but with their turn of thought, and with that racial individuality which baffles description, have given me certain advantages over the average student, however deeply he may have studied. (p.xviii)

Burton is positioning himself as the ultimate authority over the Arab text and context. Moreover, he stresses the epistemological value of his “notes”, which mark out the ‘difference’ of his edition from an otherwise familiar text.

Yet Burton’s consciously self-fashioned ‘difference’ in his approach to *The Nights* is to be seen in light of his larger ‘Otherness’, which characterised his scholarly approach since his childhood, as we have seen earlier. If young Burton’s choice of pursuing Arabic at Oxford was

⁸³ Dr John Steinhaeuser “was a fine linguist and eager collector of Oriental literature, who first encouraged Burton in his idea of translating an expurgated version of the *Arabian Nights*” (Brodie, p.71). Dr Steinhaeuser was meant to co-translate *The Arabian Nights* with Burton; however, he died in Berne, Switzerland, when Burton was in Brazil. Burton inscribes the first volume of his work to his memory (p.ix).

⁸⁴ John Payne’s translation of *The Nights* (1882-84) is the most complete after Burton’s. Burton discusses it in detail in his Foreword.

meant to voice his rebellion and further distance him from the British institution, mature Burton's insistence on highlighting the epistemological value of his work can be seen as his will to assert the validity of his chosen language of knowledge. More importantly, it can also be seen as his method of not only confronting his old conflicts with the British institution (epistemological and otherwise), but also challenging it by offering a unique approach that he believes is necessarily needed at this stage. Strikingly, Burton ends his Foreword on a highly significant imperial note that would be guaranteed to win him some support at home – even if imperial-based:

This book is indeed a legacy which I bequeath to my fellow-countrymen in their hour of need. Over-devotion to Hindu, and especially to Sanskrit literature, has led them astray from those (so-called) 'Semitic' studies, which are the more requisite for us as they teach us to deal successfully with a race more powerful than any pagans – the Moslem. Apparently England is ever forgetting that she is at present the greatest Mohammedan empire in the world. Of late years she has systematically neglected Arabism and, indeed, actively discouraged it in the examinations for the Indian Civil Service, where it is incomparably more valuable than Greek and Latin. Hence, when suddenly compelled to assume the reins of government in Moslem lands, as Afghanistan in times past and Egypt at present, she fails after a fashion which scandalises her few (very few) friends; and her crass ignorance concerning the Oriental peoples which should most interest her, exposes her to the contempt of Europe as well as of the Eastern world. When the regrettable raids of 1883-84, culminating in the miserable affairs of Tokr, Teb and Tamasi, were made upon the gallant Sudani negroids, the Bisharin outlaying Sawakin, who were battling for the holy cause of liberty and religion and for escape from Turkish task-masters and Egyptian tax gathers, not an English official in camps, after the death of the gallant and lamented major Morice, was capable of speaking Arabic. Now Moslems are not to be ruled by raw youths who should be at school and college instead of holding positions of trust and emolument. He who would deal with them successfully must be, firstly, honest and truthful and, secondly, familiar with and favourably inclined to their manners and customs if not to their law and religion. We may, perhaps, find it hard to restore to England those pristine virtues, that tone and temper, which made her what she is; but at any rate we (myself and a host of others) can offer her the means of dispelling her ignorance concerning the Eastern races with whom she is continually in contact. (pp.xxiii-xxiv)

This rather sharp and reassured conclusion to Burton's Foreword highlights his conscious emphasis on the epistemological value of his work for the British Empire and its existence and interaction with the Arab-Muslim world.

Nonetheless, Burton is admittedly an Arab storyteller according to whose fashion the approach to Eastern knowledge must be recited *in full*. Thus, he must warn his English reader about "one matter of special importance in the book - its *turpiloquium*" (p.xv); that is, obscene speech. He goes on to highlight an important 'difference' between Eastern and Western traditions of storytelling; he writes,

[...] the European novelist marries off his hero and heroine and leaves them to consummate marriage in privacy; even Tom Jones has the decency to bolt the door. But the Eastern story-teller, especially this unknown 'prose Shakespeare', must usher you, with a flourish, into the bridal chamber and narrate to you, with infinite gusto, everything he sees and hears. (p.xvi)

However, Burton reminds the reader that,

[...] grossness and indecency, in fact *les turpitudes*, are matters of time and place; what is offensive in England is not so in Egypt; what scandalises us now would have been a tame joke *tempore Elisa*". Withal *The Nights* will not be found in this matter coarser than many passages of Shakespeare, Sterne, and Swift, and their uncleanness rarely attains the perfection of Alcofribas Nasier, 'divin maître et atroce cochon'. (p.xvi)

This juxtaposition of 'difference' and 'similarity' between European and Oriental literatures will make a more sophisticated return in Burton's "Terminal Essay", as we shall see later in this chapter. However, the comparative reference to moral relativism exposes an interesting angle in Burton's narrative. In other words, if the intellectual value of Burton's new translation lies in its complete reproduction of the Oriental saga, those who want to benefit from it must be prepared to face and understand the text's 'Other' morality. Burton's exposure of this alleged 'gap of difference' in literary morality is what I am going to explore next before I move on to the "Terminal Essay".

Difference: whose difference?

Having highlighted strands of Burton's approach to translating *The Arabian Nights*, I would like to unpick some of the complicated threads in his self-fashioned, Oriental-based emphasis on 'difference' and its relation to the value of his work. As we have seen, Burton uses his alleged expertise in the 'Otherness' of the Arab Orient as his point of departure. However, the power of Burton's narrative lies (partially at least) in its reliance on existing strong perceptions of 'Otherness' concerning the various aspects of Oriental life. Indeed, when warning his readers about *The Nights*' "*turpiloquium*", Burton relies on existing stereotypical Orientalist authority to support its alleged wide spread; he writes,

As Sir William Jones observed long ago, 'that anything natural can be offensively obscene never seems to have occurred to the Indians or their legislators; a singularity (?) pervading their writings and conversation, but no proof of moral depravity.' Another justly observes, *Les peuples primitifs n'y entendent pas malice: ils appellent les choses par leurs noms et ne trouvent pas condamnable ce qui est naturel*. And they are prying children. (p.xv)

Of course, such notions about "Orientals" were commonplace at the time; Burton was merely drawing on their effective legacy. In his overview of Burton's *Nights*' reviewers, Kennedy

(2000) shows that even the supportive reviewers, who “defended the *Nights* as a repository of orientalist knowledge” would take the casual view that “‘licentiousness of language and life ... [was] inseparable from Orientals’” (p.327). Kennedy rightly points out that, regardless of whether they praised his work or denounced it, Burton’s reviewers were united in what they perceived as “the essential otherness of the society portrayed in the *Nights*” (p.328).⁸⁵

For her part, Colligan (2006) argues that “[f]rom the early nineteenth century, the English believed that the Arabs were notorious sodomites” (p.77). She quotes the 1813 author⁸⁶ of *The Phoenix of Sodom* in order to show the extent to which “assumptions” about the Arabs’ sexual ‘Otherness’ were common in England; the author wrote: that “The Arabs, indeed, make very light of the offence, especially when committed with a beast; the Mohametans, also, are much addicted to the crime (at least by the testimony by some travellers)” (p.77). As far as perceptions of Arab sexual/moral ‘Otherness’ are concerned, Burton’s accounts did not seem to provide the late Victorians with anything new; they mainly reaffirmed and *reproduced* existing patterns of difference. As we have seen in the previous chapter, such perceptions had been deeply entrenched in the European psyche well before Burton wrote about them. However, it was the detailed nature of these vivid depictions as well as what some may have seen as ‘scholarly-dressed’ discussions of these perceptions that gave rise to much of the controversy surrounding their epistemological and moral value. Nonetheless, as Colligan points out, Burton still “relie[d] on cultural difference to defend the sexual content of his work [...]” (p.62).

Burton’s pretext of relying on ‘cultural difference’ did not silence his critics, however. One such notable response to Burton’s publication was that of John Morley,⁸⁷ who “repudiate[d] Burton’s claim that his work aim[ed] to instruct the student of anthropology and orientalism” (Colligan, p.64). In denouncing the “scholarship” of Burton’s book, Morley asked “Students! Students of what? Does any one need to be told that the vast majority of them are simply students of what I shall call [...] Pornography?” (cited in Colligan, p.64). This first attack gave way to Morley’s second follow-up criticism that was published in a famous article, “The

⁸⁵ Kennedy specifies the “moral dimension” as the focal point of agreement among Burton’s otherwise disagreeing critics; he writes, “[...] the determining point of these differences for the critics of Burton was reducible to the moral dimension” (p.327).

⁸⁶ The author was Robert Holloway.

⁸⁷ Morley wrote his response in an article entitled ‘Pantagruelism or pornography’ and published it on 14 September 1885 under the pseudonym of Sigma (Colligan, p.64).

Ethics of Dirt”, which itself became subject to so many responses,⁸⁸ polarising the debate on Burton’s book. In this article, Morley makes the following significant points:

I am not prepared to formulate a complete ‘Ethics of Dirt’, but it seems to me clear that there is, for us, a vast difference between the obscenity of our own classics and that of the Mohammedan East, or, to put it generally, between European and Asian obscenity. In the garden of western literature there are many foul quagmires which must be faced by the explorer; but we have a legitimate – nay, an imperative – interest in wading through them. Is there any reason why we should laboriously import the gigantic muck heaps of other races, place them *très curieux*, and charge a high price for the privilege of wallowing in them? I think not. (cited in Colligan, p.64)

Furthermore, Morley appears to take a stern nationalist stance on the ‘risk’ of “wading through” Oriental “muck heaps”. Colligan shows how Morley believed that Burton’s *Arabian Nights* was an insidious threat to the British moral and national character. It threatened the ‘unsullied’ sanctity of British domesticity, and British prudery was apparently worth defending” (p.65). It is highly significant that Morley’s reaction came as a direct result of a deeply entrenched perception of Arab-Oriental sexual/moral ‘Otherness’. In fact, Morley’s second (follow-up) article was meant to stress the particular “offensiveness” of Burton’s book because of its “focus on Arab sexuality” (Colligan, p.65). If anything, this goes to show the extent to which European perceptions of Arab sexual morality were firmly established.⁸⁹

More importantly, Morley’s argument positions Burton’s, otherwise scholarly, translation in a different light. For Morley, Burton’s work is of value only for “students of [...] Pornography”. This consideration situates Burton’s Orientalist scholarship within the late nineteenth-century discourse on pornography. In his survey of the history of writing about pornography, Marcus Wood (2002) highlights the ‘other’ previously unacknowledged forms of pornography that had not, until recently, been considered as such. He points out how anti-slavery propaganda narratives, for example, included forms of pornographic display that objectified the black body (2002, p.89). These narratives, among others, were not considered or seen as pornographic (pp.89-91). Wood explains,

Pornography focused on slave imagery flourished in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and was produced as ‘high art’ by people for whom erotic imagery was

⁸⁸ The article was published on 29 September 1885; see Colligan (pp.57-95) for an overview of Burton’s reviewers.

⁸⁹ Indeed, the instance of Beckford’s *Vathek*, which was highlighted in the previous chapter, shows the extent to which such perceptions were strongly held. For we ought to remember that, unlike Burton, who knew and travelled extensively in the Arab Orient, Beckford was nonetheless able to reproduce an Orientalist narrative of fiction that revolved around Other sexual morality. Burton’s first-hand experience as well as his manipulation of fact and popular fiction may have strengthened the ‘offensiveness’ of his narrative by endowing it with an added sense of anthropological, scholarly-like ‘documentation’.

central. Both inside and outside the realms of 'high art' a lot of this material was disseminated ostensibly as anti-slavery propaganda, and as such has never been critically constructed or read as pornography. (Wood, p.89)

Burton's *academic* work on a classic text of Arabic literature, on the other hand, was explicitly deemed to be pornographic by some of the critics of *his own time*.⁹⁰ By so doing, such critics were inevitably drawing connections between sexuality, scholarship, knowledge and pornography. By criticising Burton's translational work for its attempt to reproduce accounts of 'Arab sexuality', Morley was paradoxically propagating Burton's agenda for him; that is, establishing linkage between knowledge and sexuality on the one hand, and dispelling narratives of prudery by inexorably presenting his critique as an act of dismissive selective hypocrisy, on the other. Burton himself was to respond in *Supplemental Nights* and further reflect on the relationship between knowledge and sexuality; he writes,

How often do we hear women in society lamenting that they have absolutely no knowledge of their own physiology; and what heavy price this fruit of knowledge-tree be bought by the young first entering life. Shall we ever understand that ignorance is not innocence? [...] Where [...] is the shame of teaching what it is shameful not to have learnt? But the ultra-delicacy, the squeamishness of an age which is by no means purer or more virtuous than its ruder predecessors, has ended in trenching upon the ridiculous. Let us see what the modern English woman and her Anglo-American sister have become under the working of a mock-modesty which too often acts cloak to real *dévergondage*; and how Respectability unmakes what nature made. She has feet but no 'toes'; ankles but no 'calves'; knees but no 'thighs'; a stomach but no 'belly' nor 'bowls'; a heart but no 'bladder' nor 'groin'; a liver and no 'kidneys'; hips and no 'haunches'; a bust and nor 'backside' nor 'buttocks': in fact, she is a monstium, a figure only to frighten the crows. (1888 vol.6, p.438)

Yet Burton insists that the image is very different in the "East" and that there is something to be learnt from this difference:

[...] Moslems and Easterns in general study and intelligently study the art and mystery of satisfying the physical woman. [...] The mock virtue, the most immodest modesty of England and of the United States in the xixth century, pronounces the subject foul and fulsome: 'Society' sickens at all details; and hence it is said abroad that the English

⁹⁰ As pointed out earlier in this chapter, not all of Burton's reviewers were damning in their critique. In fact, some reviewers championed his original scholarship. The importance of this mixed response lies in the controversy and debate about literary sexual morality, which ensued upon the publication of the translation. One can imagine Burton would have been quite pleased with this achievement. After all, Burton's contribution to pornographic discourse and the critical controversy it created would fall into what other pornographic narratives had done in history; that is, creating a schism between "oppressors/censors" on the one hand and "pornographers/free thinkers" on the other. In this regard, quoting Lynn Hunt on the historiography of pornography, Wood shows how "pornography [becomes] a site for cultural contestation. The emergence of a pornographic industry, and of a pornographic counter canon, is seen as continent upon the shifting culture wars between oppressors/censors and pornographers/free thinkers" (2002, p.90).

have the finest women in Europe and least know how to use them. Throughout the East such studies are aided by a long series of volumes, many of them written by learned physiologists, by men of social standing and by religious dignitaries in his office. (1886 vol.10, pp.199-200)

Indeed, Burton appears to turn Morley's and others' criticisms against them and underscore the connection between knowledge and sexuality. Nonetheless, what seems to offend the likes of Morley is not so much the explicit nature of Burton's translations, which, they admit, is somehow mirrored in the "garden of western literature". For the criticism stems from Burton's deliberate choice to "import the gigantic muck heaps of other races". In other words, the objection, in Morley's words, has to do with the *origin* of this form of pornography – Oriental pornography – that Burton was engaged in reproducing. In this light, Burton's contribution to pornographic discourse came as a result of his Orientalist *translational* scholarship, which combined and conflated fictional and anthropological literature and produced what came to be seen as Oriental pornography by some of his detractors. As suggested by Morley's statement above, the main objection to this form of pornography appears to lie in its Arab root, which Burton was exposing to the British public at the time. Thanks to Burton, such stereotypical narratives concerning Arab and Muslim sexual morality were being further entrenched in nineteenth-century Orientalist discourse regardless of the *anachronistic* nature of his carefully selected medieval primary texts. For we ought to remember that all of Burton's nineteenth-century translational scholarship on Arab sexuality is based on selected medieval primary sources, which have never been regarded as 'high art'. In fact, *The Arabian Nights* has traditionally been considered a folkloric, somewhat vulgar, piece of popular literature by Arab belletrists.

Therefore, was the depiction of the medieval Oriental societies in *The Nights* truly representative of contemporary (late nineteenth-century) Arab culture and literature? As we have seen briefly in the previous chapter, the nineteenth century was the age of "transformation" in the Arab world. As pointed out, the nineteenth-century translation movement was behind much of the change, which resulted in dramatic social and literary reconfigurations of many aspects of Arab culture and literature, including its construction of sexual morality. Indeed, one of the major changes was the demise of *ghazal al-mudhakkar* (male-love poetry) in the wake of the (often assimilationist) modern encounter with European (Victorian) culture and literature. In fact, Burton himself came across a new Arabic edition of *The Nights* that appears to have been the product of this period of narrative experimentalism

aiming at expurgating sexual references.⁹¹ Providing bibliographic details on the various editions of the Arabic text he worked from (pp.xix-xx), Burton mentions a “Bayrut [edition of] ‘Alif-Leila we Leila’ (4 vols. gt. 8vo, Beirut 1881-83)” (p.xx).⁹² The “Text”, Burton writes, “is a melancholy specimen of The Nights taken entirely from the Bulak Edition by one Khalil Sarkis and converted to Christianity; beginning without Bismillah, continued with scrupulous castration and ending in ennui and disappointment. I have not used this missionary production” (p.xx).

Khalil Sarkis (1842-1915) was a Christian Lebanese journalist, author, publisher and printer (Ayalon 2008, p.566). An Arab *Nahda* (Renaissance) intellectual,⁹³ he was also part of the nineteenth-century wave of the Arab intelligentsia who travelled to and wrote about Europe. Abu-Lughod (1963) cites his book, *The Journey of the Director* [i.e. himself, Khalil Sarkis] *to Constantinople, Europe and America* (1893), which is based on his trip to these places, as one of the examples of Arab modern writings about Europe and its culture at the time (p.86). In Ayalon’s words, Sarkis “optimised the *Nahda* publishing enterprise with its many colours” (p.564). Sarkis is also known for launching his semi-weekly, *Lisan al-Hal*, in October 1877; the paper “immediately became one of the country’s leading newspapers and remained so for a full century” (Ayalon, p.565).⁹⁴ In his capacity as a prominent publisher, Sarkis contributed to the publication of important works from “the old Arab literary heritage”; among these works were “classic masterpieces,”⁹⁵ some appearing in local print for the first time”, such as “*Alf Layla wa-Layla*”, or *The Arabian Nights* (Ayalon, p.566). Sarkis announced the new three-volume publication of *The Arabian Nights* in a June edition of his newspaper in 1880 (Ayalon, p.569), hence Burton’s reference to the “Bayrut Text” above.

It is significant that Burton dismisses Sarkis’s bowdlerised edition – the most recent version of the text in the original Arabic – as a “scrupulous castration [that is] ending in ennui

⁹¹ As we will see in Chapter Four, anti-Ottoman nationalist sentiment was behind much of the discursive change in the construction of literary sexual morality, which was evident in the literature of the Arab *Nahda* (Renaissance), which started in the nineteenth century.

⁹² ‘*Alf Leila we Leila*’, literally ‘a thousand nights and one night’, is the Arabic title for *The Arabian Nights*.

⁹³ Aspects of the Arab cultural and political *Nahda* will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four; however, it is important to bear in mind that it was during the *Nahda* that the conceptualisation of sexual morality was undergoing a significant change in Arab public discourse, as pointed out in the previous chapter.

⁹⁴ The newspaper, translating roughly as “*One’s Own Tongue*”, is considered the oldest Lebanese publication still published in Lebanon – although the paper stopped during the Lebanese Civil War in the 1970s.

⁹⁵ Sarkis’s list of classics also included “*Layla*; *Kalila wa-Dimna*; the epics of *Antara bin Shaddad*, *Sayf bin Dhi Yazan*, and *Bani Hilal*; Hariri’s *Maqamat*; al-Suyuti’s *Miftah al-Ulum*; and Ibn Khaldun’s *Muqaddima*” (Ayalon, p.566). Ayalon also shows that Sarkis published “Modern works, original and translated” too; these “include poetry collections (*diwans*); novels and stories; books on language, history, and philosophy; and school texts” (p.566). Ayalon also notes that a “substantial proportion of this rich rainbow are modestly sized pieces, skinny booklets in small format, typically individual stories or minor collections of poems, apparently reflecting the publisher’s cautious strategy and his desire to render works affordable to an audience with humble means [...]” (p.566).

and disappointment". Burton, the 'authentic' Anglo-Arab "*Ràwi*", does not approve of any alterations made to the original text of the classic, even if these alterations were to be made by a contemporary Arab intellectual – i.e. a representative of *current* Arab thought. In the first couple of lines in his Foreword, Burton praises *The Nights* as "a charm, a talisman against ennui and despondency" (p.vii); yet its expurgated version renders it its very antithesis. Needless to say, Burton's implication is highly sexualised – the disapproved work, much like previous incomplete translations, is a "castration". On another occasion, while defending the value of his own unexpurgated translation, Burton wrote, "a bowdlerised book loses half its influence and bears the same relationship to its prototype as a castrato to a male masculant" (cited in Colligan 2006, p.71). Yet, admittedly, Burton himself points out that "the object of this [i.e. his] version is to show what 'The Thousand Nights and a Night' really is [...] by writing as the Arab would have written in English" (Burton 1886 vol.1, p.xiii). Thus, the crucial question is: *which* "Arab" is Burton referring to? More precisely, the "manners" and "habits" of the Arab of *which era* exactly is Burton's narrative trying to elucidate, the medieval Arab or the contemporary one?

More importantly, what is the value of Burton's epistemological approach to Eastern enlightenment if what it is offering appears to be anachronistic and/or inaccurate? As we have seen, Burton's Foreword is replete with references to the scholarly, cross-cultural and even imperial value of his unexpurgated account of the Arab classic. Even before publishing the book, part of Burton's promotional propaganda centred on emphasising the work's alleged anthropological and sociological value. In an appendix to the sixth volume of *Supplemental Nights* (1888), Burton describes the "Engineering of the Work" and the procedures he went through before publishing the 1000 copies of the work. Interestingly, one promotional circular stated,

The student of Arabic who reads "THE NIGHTS" with this version, will not only be competent to join in any conversation, to pursue the popular books and newspapers, and to write letters to his friends, he will also find in the notes a repertoire of those Arabian Manners and Customs, Beliefs and Practices, which are not discussed in popular works (Burton 1888 vol.6, p391).

Evidently, however, Burton's account of these "Manners and Customs, Beliefs and Practices" did not seem compatible with the general outlook of the contemporary cultural and literary trajectory of the Arab *Nahda* towards the *fin de siècle*. Sarkis's bowdlerised Arabic edition of *The Nights* (1881-83) tallies with the general tendency of the period's literature to eliminate references to what came to be deemed as sexually immoral. References to sodomy were, of

course, part and parcel of this tendency. Massad (2007) shows how this was particularly common with accounts of Arabic literature whose 'deviant sexuality' had been "highlighted by Orientalists" (p.72). Recounting Burton's own summary⁹⁶ of the accounts of pederasty that occurred in *The Nights*, Massad shows that "[...] the 1836 Arabic edition of *A Thousand and One Nights* [...] that preceded Burton's [1886] declaration included the story of Abu Nuwas and the three youths; [however], the reprinted edition of 1930 opted to eliminate it (and a few others) altogether" (p.73). Of course, other boy-love literary accounts were also heavily expurgated.⁹⁷

Not only were such literary depictions of sexuality being gradually expurgated from Arabic literature, but their very referencing (albeit critical), was also being frowned upon and criticised in public critical discourse. Remarkably, not dissimilar to John Morley's criticism of Burton's decision to "laboriously import [...] gigantic muck heaps" from the "Mohammedan East", contemporary critics in the "Mohammedan East" itself were, too, being severely critical of any attempts to excavate signs of 'incompatible' sexual morality from their past literary heritage. Massad shows how Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq's 1855 *magnum opus*, *Al-Saq 'ala al-Saq* [*One Leg over Another*], in which he discussed sexual matters openly, came under attack in 1902 from the "major *turath*"⁹⁸ compiler and historian Juri Zaydan, who had the following to say" about al-Shidyaq's book:⁹⁹

We cannot proceed beyond our description of the book of the Fariyaq [*One Leg over Another*] before mentioning something that we had hoped God would spare us looking into, namely that he [Shidyaq] had mentioned in that book terms and expressions intended to express bawdiness [*mujun*] but went beyond its limits so much so that no man of letters could recite it without wishing that it had not occurred to our Shaykh and that he had not included it in his book in order to steer the pens of writers away from what would cause a young man, not to mention a virgin [girl], to blush [*khajal*] (Zaydan, p.90, Cited in Massad, p.36).

The changing discourse of sexual morality in Arab culture and literature will, of course, be further discussed in Chapter Four. However, these samples show the extreme irony evident in

⁹⁶ See Burton's three-category classification of 'pederasty' in the "Terminal Essay" on (pp.252-253). The second category is made in reference to the (in)famous Abbasid poet, Abu Nuwas, who debauches three youths in one of the tales.

⁹⁷ See Massad (p.73) who shows that even collections of Abu Nuwas's poetry were being censored for homoerotic references. Massad argues that "These censorious developments were very much part of the project emphasising the pedagogical role that the past was supposed to play in the present by eliminating features that did not accord with modern (read European) normativity" (p.73). Chapter Four will discuss these developments in more detail and link them to T. E. Lawrence's relationship with the Arab East.

⁹⁸ The term, *turath*, Arabic for 'heritage', is used by Joseph Massad (2007) to refer to what came to be regarded as an important cultural project by nationalist-imbued Arab critics and intellectuals towards the end of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. This will be revisited in Chapter Four.

⁹⁹ Ironically, this is so despite al-Shidyaq's own complaint about the "medieval Arab men's practices of polygamy and taking concubines [which he saw as] one of the reasons for the destruction of the medieval Arabs, as it did the Greeks, the Persians, and the Romans" (Massad, pp.35-36).

Burton's supposedly 'enlightening' intellectual endeavour. When Burton's narrative was reaffirming and perpetuating old perceptions of 'essentialist difference' about the sexual morality of the Arab East, critical structural changes were taking place and reshaping the conceptualisations and constructions of sexual morality in the literary circles of the contemporary Arab world. The mere fact that the text of *The Arabian Nights* was systematically shrinking in the original Arabic and paradoxically expanding in the European (English) translations (to reach full size in Burton's edition) says much about the nature of the irony at hand. Moreover, it may be very telling that Burton did not (or perhaps *chose* not to) translate any contemporary Arabic literature. Noticeably, all of his Arabic translations date back to the medieval period, as indicated earlier.

Burton prides himself on his exceptional and thorough (textual and experiential) knowledge of the Arab East – a knowledge he admittedly wants to pass on to his fellow countrymen and Orientalists via the medium of literary translation. As Kennedy argues, "Burton saw himself as a missionary of sorts, preaching his gospel of sexual knowledge to the unenlightened [...]" (p.330). Highlighting the epistemological value of his notes, Burton reassures the reader that, "The student who adds the notes of Lane ('Arabian Society', etc., before quoted) to mine will know as much of the Moslem East and more than many Europeans who have spent half of their lives in Orient lands" (1886 vol.1, p.xix). Clearly, Burton's notes did not reflect a very accurate image of the contemporary status quo in the Arab East concerning the changing conceptualisation of sexual morality at the time. Certainly, Burton did not lack linguistic abilities nor the cultural means to keep himself informed. However, whether or not he was intrinsically aware of the *Nahda*-spirited cultural and literary changes in the Arab world may remain a matter of speculation.¹⁰⁰ Nonetheless, the discrepancies in his portrayal of the image of literary and cultural sexual morality in the Arab East pose questions about his motives. These motives are what I am going to explore next as well as the ensuing legacy of Burton's manipulation of the relationship between 'text' and 'experience', fiction and fact, in his rather fantastical portrayal of sexual morality in the Arab-Muslim East. This will be done by offering a closer scrutiny of Burton's narrative, which seems to sustain perceptions of difference in his theorisation of 'pederasty' in the "Terminal Essay".

¹⁰⁰ Intriguingly, nonetheless, Burton appears to remark the European-influenced cultural shift among the Egyptian upper classes. Accounting for the contemporary manifestation of 'pederasty' in Egypt, Burton observes, "In the present age extensive intercourse with Europeans has produced not a reformation but a certain reticence amongst the [Egyptian] upper classes: they are vicious as ever, but they do not care for displaying their vices to the eyes of mocking strangers" (1886, p.225). Burton's contemporary Arab scholars of the *Nahda* would probably be appalled by this narrative. One can imagine that their reaction would be more in line with Morley's, which goes to show the irony in Burton's discursive dissemination of 'Oriental enlightenment'.

The “Terminal Essay”: an undoing of ‘difference’?

But I repeat (p.xvi.) there is another element in *The Nights* and that is one of absolute obscenity utterly repugnant to English readers, even the least prudish. It is chiefly connected with what our neighbours call *Le vice contre nature* – as if anything can be contrary to nature which includes all things. Upon this subject I must offer details as it does not enter into my plan to ignore any theme which is interesting to the Orientalist and the Anthropologist. [...] and now I proceed to discuss the matter sérieusement, honnêtement, historiquement; to show it in decent nudity not in suggestive fig-leaf or feuille de vigne. (Burton 1886 vol.10, pp.204-5)

Burton’s “Terminal essay” is where his Foreword, notes and translation of *The Nights* as a whole are synthesised into an impressive piece of anthropological literature ‘proper’ offering a “panorama of Eastern Life”, to use Mahsin Jassim’s words. Concluding the ten-volume translation of the literary text of *The Arabian Nights*, the dense and lengthy essay branches into literary and anthropological parts with specialised sections tackling various sociological aspects of Oriental life.¹⁰¹ Interestingly, much of its anthropological analysis refers to literary anecdotes in the text of *The Nights*, the essay’s point of reference. Occasionally, the fictional tales of *The Nights* are used as allegories revealing some cultural ‘truth’ about the nature of Oriental societies, so much so that the border between the fictional and the allegedly factual is significantly blurred. In line with his narrative strategy in the Foreword, Burton draws on his personal experiences in the East and amalgamates them with a wide array of historical, religious, fictional and even popular stereotypical beliefs about the Orient in general and the Muslim East in particular.

Since its publication, the “Terminal Essay” has received much attention. Indeed, we have seen a glimpse of the polarised debate it caused (along with the full body of the unexpurgated edition of *Nights*). Critically, however, the essay is important on many levels. Colligan shows how the section on ‘Pornography’, for example, was “[...] notable for being the first British attempt to theorise pornography” (p.67). More specifically, the essay highlights Burton’s pioneering work on male-to-male sexuality,¹⁰² which, as Colligan argues, tends to be forgotten by scholars studying the history of homosexuality in Britain (pp.73-74). Brodie considers Burton’s section on ‘Pederasty’ as “one of the first attempts by an Englishman to explore the subject with something of like clinical detachment” (1971, p.387). Kennedy (2000),

¹⁰¹ The 240-page essay combines a rich study of not only the literary text of *The Nights* (its style, history, origin, poetry, etc.), but also certain anthropological aspects of Arab society. Although Burton highlights the medieval origin of the text of *The Nights* (pp.63-65), his ensuing anthropological analyses make no temporal distinctions between the literary-based references and his personal contemporary experiences in the Arab East. This will be further highlighted in my upcoming analysis of Burton’s narrative style.

¹⁰² Colligan argues that Burton’s interest in pederasty “created and responded to cultural interest in male sodomy and homosexual identity in Britain during the 1880s” (p.73).

too, argues that the importance of Burton's contribution to the study of "homosexuality as a distinct type of sexual identity" may have gone largely unnoticed by scholars (pp.336).¹⁰³

Nonetheless, the essay remains most famous perhaps for its dedicated section on 'Pederasty',¹⁰⁴ in which Burton formulates his theory about the "Sotadic Zone"¹⁰⁵ – a climatically determined geographical zone, within whose limits the "Vice" (i.e. 'pederasty') "is popular and endemic" (Burton 1886 vol.10, pp.206-207). It is important to point out that at the time Burton was writing, the term, 'pederasty', referred to male-to-male sexuality in general; it "did not [necessarily] denote intergenerational sex" (Colligan, p.73). Theoretically, this distinction expands Burton's categorical inclusivity of same-sex desire.¹⁰⁶ As regards racial inclusivity, Burton's emphasis on the climatic – not ethnic – factor in determining the popularity and wide spread of 'pederasty' offers an important non-racist perspective on understanding the phenomenon.¹⁰⁷ Burton writes, "[...] I hold [Pederasty] to be geographical and climatic, not racial [...]" (p.207). Critics have picked up on the significance of Burton's distinction. Aldrich (2003) argues that "The idea that homosexuality was endemic and climatically caused implied that, at some level it was a natural occurrence rather than wilfully sinful behaviour" (p.31). On his part, Kennedy (2000) argues that Burton's climatic-based interpretation for "[...] the cause of pederasty [...] sought to naturalise the phenomenon, removing it from the realm of religious and moral strictures" (p.335), hence the further potential inclusivity. Yet, despite the essay's relative novelty – breaking away from racist-based concepts of 'difference' – it drew heavily on existing perceptions of Oriental 'Otherness'; albeit, climatic-based. Kennedy (2000) argues that part of what gave ground to Burton's theory lay in "[t]he association in the English mind of hot climates with the absence of sexual restraint

¹⁰³ Kennedy points out that Burton's "'Terminal Essay' was the first serious inquiry into same-sex liaisons to address a public audience in Britain" (pp.336-37). He goes on to compare Burton's essay with Ellis's *Sexual Inversion* (1897), which is "commonly regarded as the pioneering English-language study of homosexuality" (p.337). Kennedy shows how despite Ellis's conscious emphasis on a scientific (medical and psychological) approach (as opposed to Burton's anthropological and geographical one), he (Ellis) seems to echo some of Burton's ideas; see Kennedy (pp.337-38). This, I argue, places even more importance on Burton's distinct (i.e. Other) approach, which can be seen as further validation to the epistemological value of his overall Otherness, which, as we have seen, started in his childhood.

¹⁰⁴ See Section D, on 'Pederasty' (pp.205-54), within Part IV on 'Social Condition' in the "Terminal Essay".

¹⁰⁵ Burton's Sotadic Zone is "bounded westwards by the northern shores of the Mediterranean (N. Lat. 43°) and by the southern (N. Lat. 30°). Thus the depth would be 780 to 800 miles including meridional France, the Iberian Peninsula, Italy and Greece, with the coast-regions of Africa from Morocco to Egypt. Running eastward the Sotadic Zone narrows, embracing Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and Chaldea, Afghanistan, Sind, the Punjab and Kashmir. In the Indo-China the belt begins to broaden, enfolding China, Japan and Turkistan. It then embraces the South Sea Islands and the New World where, at the time of its discovery, Sotadic love, was some exceptions, an established racial institution" (Burton 1886, pp.206-207).

¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, Burton's Section on 'Pederasty' also include accounts of female homosexuality as well as historical references to gender cross-dressing. Indeed, the Section encompasses a wide range of various sexual practices.

¹⁰⁷ Burton explained the effect of the climatic factor of the Sotadic Zone as "a blending of the masculine and feminine temperaments" (p.208). He also argues that outside the Sotadic Zone, the phenomenon is "sporadic", not "endemic" (pp.207-08).

and its suspicion that the Islamic world was a sink of erotic iniquity, especially with respect to homosexual practices”; these “were some of the conceits that sustained the claims for a Sotadic Zone” (p.335).

While drawing on (and inevitably reproducing) narratives of ‘difference’ about Oriental (Arab-Muslim) sexuality, Burton was simultaneously (and quite paradoxically) deconstructing the racist aspect of the background to European prejudice against Oriental sexual morality. As I will show, this rather subtle deconstructive tendency appears to characterise much of Burton’s narrative in the “Terminal Essay” and other writings. It is evident in the very paragraph in which he declares his intention to discuss “*Le vice contre nature*” – a statement he hastens to modify as if to remind the reader that nothing (within nature) can logically be contrary to nature as it (nature) “includes all things” (p.204). In what follows, I am going to draw on a selection of passages that highlight the effectiveness of Burton’s (often) paradoxical narrative in subtly deconstructing certain perceptions about “Le Vice”. In addition, I would like to reflect on the functionality of the overall structure in Burton’s book.¹⁰⁸ I would like to show how Burton’s structure enables him to further manipulate and blur the *generic* distinction between the literary and the anthropological in his scholarly (re)production of the Arab East. Needless to say, this is intrinsically linked to Burton’s use of Orientalism in which he relies on his textual as well as experiential knowledge of the Arab East as has been discussed above. The overall aim, of course, is to offer a closer examination of Burton’s reproduced narratives of difference and determine *whether* they (re)construct or, indeed, *deconstruct* ‘difference’.

To begin with, Burton opens up the Section on ‘Pederasty’ by provocatively relating the details of a controversial personal episode – his experience of the male brothels in Karachi – that had arguably ruined his reputation and ended his army career in India forty years earlier.¹⁰⁹ For the first time, Burton publicly discloses what had happened in Karachi when, in 1845 under instructions from Sir Charles Napier,¹¹⁰ he was asked to investigate a report that “not more than a mile from [his] camp, [Karachi] supported no less than three lupanars or brodels, in which not women but boys and eunuchs, the former demanding nearly a double

¹⁰⁸ That is, the functional relationship between translating a gigantic work of Arabic literature and ending the translation with a piece of anthropological literature about Arab-Muslim culture (i.e. the “Terminal Essay”).

¹⁰⁹ Other aspects to the significance of Burton’s choice to open up his essay with this episode will be further highlighted towards the end of this section. For details on Burton’s intelligence work in India, see Brodie’s chapter, “Sind” in her biography of Burton (1971, pp.53-83).

¹¹⁰ Sir Charles Napier was “the conqueror of Sind [...] who in 1843 in two great battles against 60,000 natives had killed 10,000, made nine sovereign princes captive, conquered or conciliated 400 chiefs, and annexed over 50,000 square miles of northern India for the Queen” (Brodie, p.65).

price,¹¹¹ lay for hire” (Burton 1886 vol.10, p.205). Burton was the only officer who could speak Sindi, hence Sir Charles’s choice. Burton’s choice to open up the Section with a first-hand personal experience of Oriental pederasty highlights his narrative strategy in which he aims to establish strong connections between the experiential, the fictional and the anthropologically cultural. For we ought to remember that the Section is supposed to discuss “an element in [the text of] *The Nights*” (Burton 1886 vol.10, p.204). Yet the discussion starts with an experiential anecdote, hence Burton’s discursive amalgamation of the fictional and the allegedly factual in his scholarly reproduction of the Arab East and its sexuality.

The essay portrays a fantastical medley of historical, geographical, religious, cultural, aesthetical,¹¹² medical and psychological amalgamations that appear to somehow unite the (ancient and modern) Sotadic world in its global (yet colourfully various) practice of ‘pederasty’.¹¹³ Early on, Burton states, “the origin of pederasty is lost in the night of ages” (p.210) – a statement, which would potentially undo the very theory of the Sotadic Zone.¹¹⁴ Starting with ancient Greece and Rome,¹¹⁵ Burton moves to North Africa and the Near East and shows how neither Christianity nor Islam managed to eradicate the practice,¹¹⁶ which

¹¹¹ Burton explains that the “reason” for this discrepancy “proved to be that the scrotum of the un mutilated boy could be used as a kind of bridle for directing the movement of the animal (p.205). This is a sample of the detailed nature of Burton’s account in this Section of the “Terminal Essay”.

¹¹² Burton embarks on a detailed discussion of the role of ‘pederasty’ and ‘Other’ sexuality in the ancient civilisations of Greece and Rome as well as the (pre-Abrahamic) Near-Eastern cultures. He reminds the reader that, “the love of boys has its noble, sentimental side. The Platonists and pupils of the Academy, followed by the Sufis or Moslem Gnostics, held such affection, pure as ardent, to be the beau idéal which united in man’s soul the creature with the Creator” (1886, p.207). In effect, Burton endows the phenomenon with a spiritual aspect, which contrasts with the connotation implied by the term he usually uses to refer to it (i.e. “Le Vice”). Of ancient Near-Eastern civilizations, he states, “Syria and Palestine, another ancient focus of abominations, borrowed from Egypt and exaggerated the worship of androgynic and hermaphroditic deities” (pp.225-226). He shows how “Le Vice” had aesthetical connotations in the rituals of the pre-Abrahamic religions of the region (See Burton’s account on Syria’s various ancient goddesses, whose worship involved sexual acts, on pp.229-230).

¹¹³ Burton refers to existing medical scholarship to speculate and account for detailed causes of what he also terms “pathological love” (p.209). He cites Professor Mantegazza, according to whom, “the nerves of the rectum and genitalia, in all cases closely connected, are abnormally so in the pathic who obtains, by intromission, the veneral orgasm which is usually sought through the sexual organs” (p.209). While this can be seen in line with drawing on existing authority, it can also be seen as a *neutralizing* process in which Burton appears to give a scientific, non-judgmental account. Indeed, Burton points out that this “pathological love deserve[s], not persecution but the pitiful care of the physician and the study of the psychologist” (p.209).

¹¹⁴ The significance of this statement will be revisited later in this chapter.

¹¹⁵ Of the ancient Greek version of the practice, Burton reminds the reader that “Amongst the Greeks of the best ages the system of boy-favourites was advocated on considerations of morals and politics” (p.207). He continues to make an imperial connection to the ‘benefits’ of boy-love; he quotes Socrates, who “declared that ‘a most valiant army might be composed of boys and their lovers; for that of all men they would be most ashamed to desert one another’” (p.208). Yet Burton is keen on dissociating ‘pederasty’ from belonging to one specific culture; he later points out that the “The ancient Greeks who, like the modern Germans, invented nothing but were great improvers of what other races invented [...]” (1886, p.211). This, of course, is to be seen in line with Burton’s deconstructive narrative, which, as I shall show, appears to propagate the practice’s universality, rather than its stereotypical essentialist exclusivity.

¹¹⁶ Although Burton states that “[...] pederasty is forbidden by the Koran” (p.223) and offers some jurisprudential views on its punishment under Islamic law (p.224), he reassures the reader that in Egypt, for example, “neither Christianity nor Al-Islam could effect a change for the better [...]” (p.225). He, once again, cites an existing

essentially spread from Rome to the colonies.¹¹⁷ Burton's narrative continues eastwards,¹¹⁸ whereby he, once again, references existing Orientalist scholarship on Oriental sexuality. He quotes Chardin,¹¹⁹ who "tells us that houses of male prostitutes were common in Persia whilst those of women were unknown" (p.234). Confirming (and reproducing) the stereotypical 'seamless continuity' of the 'Unchanging East', Burton reassures the reader that "the same is the case in the present day and the boys are prepared with extreme care by diet, baths, depilation, unguents and a host of artists in cosmetics" (p.234). Remaining in contemporary Persia, Burton once again resorts to his personal (rather vague) accounts of the 'phenomenon' – the manifestation of some of which seem more fictional than factual, with an unmistakable trace from the style and content of *The Arabian Nights* itself. For instance, Burton relates that,

A favourite Persian punishment for strangers caught in the Harem or Gynaecium is to strip and throw them and expose them to the embraces of the grooms and negro-slaves. I once asked a Shirazi how penetration was possible if the patient resisted with all the force of the sphincter muscle: he smiled and said, 'Ah, we Persians know a trick to get over that; we apply a sharpened tent-peg to the copper-bone (os coccygis) and knock till he opens'. (1886 vol.10, p.235)

The text is replete with similar anecdotes¹²⁰. Another example is that of "Shaykh Nasr,¹²¹ Governor of Bushire". This "Eastern 'Scrogin'", Burton continues,

would ask his guests if they had ever seen a man-cannon (Àdami-top); and, on their replying in the negative, a grey-beard slave was dragged in blaspheming and struggling

Orientalist authority, the "thoroughly trustworthy" French officer Sonnini, who draws the darkest picture of the widely spread criminality, especially of the bestiality and the sodomy [...], which formed the 'delight of the Egyptians'" (p.225).

¹¹⁷ See Burton's citations of ancient Roman expressions of pederasty (pp.218-21), which, he argues, are not dissimilar to those of modern contemporary Egypt; he writes, "As in modern Egypt pathic boys, we learn from Catullus, haunted the public baths. Debauchees had signals like freemasons whereby they recognised one another (p.219). Yet, what allegedly happened in contemporary Egypt had originally come from Roman civilisation itself; Burton writes, "From Rome the practice extended far and wide to her colonies. [...] Roman civilisation carried pederasty also to Northern Africa, where it took firm root, [...]. In old Mauritania, now Morocco, the Moors proper are notable sodomites; Moslems, even of saintly houses, are permitted openly to keep catamites, nor do their disciples think worse of their sanctity for such licence: [...]" (1886, pp.222-23). In this light, Burton's amalgamation emerges as very complex indeed. Not only does he conflate various cultures' manifestation of pederastic expression, but he also inter-links them historically. This, as I will show later, endows his narrative with a sense of circularity.

¹¹⁸ Notably, the Turks are referred to as a "race of born pederasts" (p.232). See Burton's observations on the "peculiarity of the feminine figure" of the women of "Turkey, Persia and Kashmir" (p.232). He also claims that the great (Kurdish) Muslim leader, Salah al-Din Yusuf ibn Ayyub (or Saladin) was "a habitual pederast" (p.233).

¹¹⁹ As we have seen in the previous chapter, Jean-Baptiste Chardin, (famous for his 1711 book, *Voyages de Monsieur le Chaveller Chardin en Perse et Autres lieux de l'Orient*), was one a great Orientalist authority on Persia. See Hopwood (1999, pp.14-15).

¹²⁰ See Burton's accounts on Persian, Afghani and Indian expressions of pederasty on pp.233-238. Two of these episodes (p.236) depict an "outburst" of "frantic debauchery" among the Harem in Afghanistan and Persia (in 1841 and 1856-56) respectively upon encountering the British officers and finding out that they were not 'pederasts'; see the details on p.236.

¹²¹ The same sheikh, Burton informs the reader, was allegedly known for habitually "inviting European youngsters, serving in the Bombay Marine and ply them with liquor till they were insensible. Next morning the middies mostly complained that the champagne had caused a curious irritation and soreness in la parte-poste" (p.235).

with all his strength. He was presently placed on all fours and firmly held by the extremities; his bag-trousers were let down and a dozen peppercorns were inserted into his: the target was a sheet of paper held at a reasonable distance; the match was applied by a pinch of cayenne in the nostrils; the sneeze started the grapeshot and the number of hits on the butt decided the bets. (pp.235-36)

Such (presumably factual) anecdotes are indeed reminiscent of the medieval humour of *The Arabian Nights*. They, among many others, show the extent to which Burton conflates the fictional with the experiential in order to account for the anthropological, hence Burton's edition's generic displacement of the otherwise familiar literary classic, as argued above.

Whether or not such accounts are historically verifiable is beside the point, however. For they need to be seen as part of Burton's strategic narrative device in his epistemological approach to the Muslim East and its sexuality. In this regard, Colligan writes,

Whether or not the historicity of Burton's account of Arab [and Oriental] pederasty can be confirmed, the section reveals a preoccupation with homosexual rape that intimates an underlying British fantasy around the sexual perversion of the Arab male and relative sexual vulnerability of the European male. The essay appropriates an Arab text and exploits Arab sexuality not only to explore forbidden sexual topics in Britain, but also to construct fantasies around compromised European male sexuality. It inverts the harem fantasy that typically imagines Arab men as effeminate sodomites and European men as virile and masterful. (p.79)

More on the significance of Burton's fantasy-like portrayal of "Le Vice" in the East will follow later in this chapter.¹²² For the time being, however, I would like to resume the analysis of Burton's essay's structure. Burton continues his Sotadic tour eastwards; he also reaches the "New World" and accounts for its Sodomotical practices.¹²³ Importantly, however, Burton starts to make his way out of the Sotadic Zone; he eventually returns to Europe to cite "local but notable instances" (Burton, p.247) of the phenomenon.

Of course, Burton has already stated at the beginning of the essay that "Le Vice" is "endemic" in the Sotadic Zone and "sporadic" elsewhere. Having visited the biblical story of

¹²² It must be noted that such accounts serve as samples of Burton's discourse on Oriental pornography. Importantly, such violent narratives about Arab/Muslim men's harems were common pornographic fantasies that had been in circulation in obscene (often banned) literary works in Europe. A notable example is *The Lustful Turk* (1828), an anonymously published erotic novel narrating the story of Emily Barlow, an Englishwoman, who was captured and enslaved by Ali, Dey of Algiers. Ali rapes her and debases her further by insisting on anal rape. Emily corresponds with her friend, Sylvia Carey, in England. Ali intercepts the two Englishwomen's correspondence and arranges for Sylvia to be abducted and brought back to the slave market in Algiers, where he acquires her and adds her to his harem. The novel's pornographic narrative centres on Orientalist fantasies and anxieties, where the two English women's sexuality appears to have been aroused by the violent Muslim rapist. Burton's anecdotes on male rape above appear to further extend this Orientalist fantasy (or perhaps anxiety) by portraying homosexual rape of European men. *The Lustful Turk* as well as Burton's rape-based pornographic narrative will be revisited and compared with T. E. Lawrence's depiction of his alleged rape in Deraa. The infamous scene, among others, in *Seven Pillars* will then be analysed in line with Burton's contribution to literary pornographic discourse. This will be done while drawing on Wood's compiled definitions of what constitutes pornography (2002, pp.92-93). The aim is to highlight Burton's and Lawrence's renditions of homosexual pornography, which will be often referred to as 'homo-pornography'.

¹²³ See Burton's exhaustive accounts of these practices that extend from Eastern Asia (China and Japan) all the way to the Americas (pp.236-46).

Sodom and Gomorrah and offered his own hermeneutic version of it,¹²⁴ Burton references a small town on the western side of the Volga River in Russia that had allegedly met the same fate as that of “the cities of the plain”. Citing Master Christopher Burrough, Burton narrates the story of “‘a very fine stone castle, called the name Oueak, and adjoining to the same a Towne called by the *Russes, Sodom*, [...] which was swallowed into the earth by the justice of God for the wickednesse [*sic*] of the people’” (p.247). Burton’s juxtaposition of the rather obscure Russian town and the well-known and oft-cited story of Sodom and Gomorrah is rather subversive. Not only is he deconstructing the borders between the Sotadic and the non-Sotadic – his own distinction – but he is also suggesting an analogical symmetry between the two. And as he has already refuted the effectiveness of Christianity and Islam in eradicating “Le Vice” in the Near East, he continues to medieval Italy to expose the allegedly Catholic-sanctioned conditional allowances for practising ‘pederasty’ in certain months of the year.¹²⁵ As far as “Le Vice” is concerned, Burton appears to be systematically deconstructing not only the relevance of the geo-climatically determined Sotadic Zone, but also the existing Orientalist narratives of ‘difference’ that had lent support to the Zone’s (previously unarticulated) definition. For we ought to remember that Burton’s *articulation* of the concept of the Sotadic Zone is but an eloquent theoretical enunciation of long-existing Orientalist prejudices and stereotypes. In this light, the *structural* narrative of the geographical tour in Burton’s essay – which begins in the Sotadic Zone and makes its way in a *circle* back to Europe – emerges with further strategic significance. This narrative circularity is not merely geographical; it is also discursively functional for it manipulates and plays on existing Orientalist perceptions of ‘difference’ only to deconstruct them.

Moving on chronologically, Burton announces, “In our modern capitals, London, Berlin and Paris [...], the Vice seems to be subject to periodical outbreaks. For many years, also, England sent her pederasts to Italy, and especially to Naples whence originated the term ‘*Il vizio Inglese*’” (pp.247-48). Previously in the Section, Burton has taken the liberty to portray the free transcendence of “Le Vice” across time and space in the Sotadic Zone – another readily accepted Orientalist stereotype. Yet, by depicting a similar pattern in Europe, Burton appears to be suggesting an almost identical symmetry to the movement of “Le Vice” in non-

¹²⁴ See Burton’s comparative analysis of the biblical story of the People of Lot as depicted in the Torah (pp.227-29) and the Quran (pp.223-24). Typically, Burton’s hermeneutic offers a comparative textual analysis (from the Bible and the Quran) combined with his archaeological observations of the site of the Pentapolis.

¹²⁵ Referencing Pierre Bayle’s (1647-1706) account on Giovanni della Casa (1503-1556), Archbishop of Benevento (from 1544 to 1556), Burton claims that the very “Dominican Order, which systematically decried Le Vice, had [in fact] presented a request to the Cardinal di Santa Lucia that sodomy might be lawful during three months per annum, June to August; [...] the Cardinal”, Burton continues, “had underwritten the petition ‘Be it done as they demand’” (1886, p.247).

Sotadic Europe. He goes on to urge his “curious” readers to consult current police reports to find out the extent to which pederastic “scandals” are wide spread in contemporary London and Dublin (p.248). Resuming his European tour, Burton now enters Germany; of Berlin, he writes “despite her strong flavour of Phariseism, Puritanism and Chauvinism in religion, manners and morals, [Berlin] is not a whit better than her neighbours” (p.248).¹²⁶ From Berlin, Burton moves on to Paris, which “is by no means more depraved than Berlin and London; but, whilst the latter hushes up the scandal, Frenchmen do not: hence we see a more copious account of it submitted to the public” (p.248). Not only is Burton systematically deconstructing the relevance of the concept of a Sotadic Zone, but he is also subverting British stereotypical perceptions of Continental sexual morality and thus further eroding any boundaries that may cast any doubt on the universality of the ‘practice’. This is further enhanced in Burton’s detailed account of the history of the ‘practice’ before and after France’s imperial ventures (in Sotadic North Africa); all the same, it implies the unaffected continuity of the ‘practice’.¹²⁷ By so doing, Burton is evidently *developing* a point he has made earlier in his essay; namely, the loss of “the origin of pederasty [...] in the nights of ages” (p.210). This, of course, is characteristically typical of Burton’s discursively subversive use of Orientalism. As Kennedy points out, “Certainly [Burton’s] dismissal of a racial explanation of pederasty was at odds with a strictly orientalist posture, as was his enthusiasm for documenting examples of its practice among Europeans” (p.335). Effectively, Burton seems to be undoing his own theory – the *thesis statement* of his essay on ‘Pederasty’ (i.e. the Sotadic Zone, itself), hence the great paradox in his deconstructive narrative.

Yet this poses questions concerning Burton’s motive for writing this comprehensive tour on the comparative history of ‘Pederasty’ and attaching it to his unexpurgated translation of *The Arabian Nights*. An answer, however, may be found in the conclusion of the Section, whereby Burton re-launches his attack on the “most immodest modesty” of the Victorians – an

¹²⁶ See the rest of Burton’s tour of German ‘pederasty’ (p.248). Of course, the significance of Burton’s portrayal of Germanic sexual dissidence lies in its subversive potentiality to challenge important eighteenth- and nineteenth-century concepts on Germanic-based Protestant ideals of ‘manliness’ and ‘respectability’, which the Victorians also shared and contrasted with what they saw as French ‘lewdness’. For instance, Mosse notes how “during the French Revolution [...] Germans had complained that the French were robbing them of morality, while some English [...] held that France sent dancers across the Channel to corrupt the nation with their lewd gestures” (Mosse 1985, p.138).

¹²⁷ Remarkably, Burton’s account on French pederasty is lengthy. Citing multiple references and authorities on the subject, it begins in the seventeenth century and ends in the contemporary period. Burton’s episodes are particularly explicit; some of which were even written in French. They exploit British stereotypes about French ‘frivolity’. Strikingly, however, they, too, appear to mirror similar manifestations of “Le Vice” in Persia and Afghanistan. At one point Burton concludes that the “Vice took such expansion and intensity that it may be said to have been democratized in cities and large towns” (p.251). See Burton’s full report on French pederasty on pp.248-252.

attack he had already alluded to in his Foreword. Juxtaposing the literary sexual morality of *The Nights* with that of contemporary European and English works, Burton had written,

Subtle corruption and covert licentiousness are utterly absent; we find more real vice in many a short French roman, say *La Dame aux Camelais*, and in not a few English novels of our day than in the thousands of pages of the Arab. Here we have nothing of that most immodest modern modesty which sees covert implication where nothing is implied, and 'improper' allusion when propriety is not outraged; nor do we meet with the Nineteenth Century refinement; innocence of the word not of the thought; morality of the tongue not of the heart, and the sincere homage paid to virtue in guise of perfect hypocrisy. (p.xvii)

Indeed, Burton appears to be turning the definition of literary pornography and obscenity on its head by subversively juxtaposing what he had previously referred to as the "decent nudity" of the *Nights* with the "suggestive fig-leaf [...] immodest modesty" of contemporary European literature. For Burton, the latter is far more obscene, licentious and corrupt. Having demonstrably juxtaposed and queried these literary moralities in detail in the "Terminal Essay", Burton now specifies those reviewers who have hypocritically denounced his work on the ground of morality:

In an age saturated with cant and hypocrisy, here and there a venal pen will mourn over the 'Pornography' of *The Nights*, dwell upon the 'Ethics of Dirt' and the 'Garbage of the Brothel;' and will lament the wanton dissemination (!) of ancient and filthy fiction.' This self-constituted Censor morum reads Aristophanes and Plato, Horace and Virgil, perhaps even Martial and Petronius, because 'veiled in the decent obscurity of a learned language'; he allows men *Latinè loqui*; but he is scandalised at stumbling-blocks much less important in plain English. To be consistent he must begin by bowdlerising not only the classics, with which boys' and youths' minds and memories are soaked and saturated at schools and colleges, but also Boccaccio and Chaucer, Shakespeare and Rabelais; Burton, Sterne, Swift, and a long list of works which are yearly reprinted and republished without a word of protest. Lastly, why does not this inconsistent puritan purge the Old Testament of its allusions to human ordure and the pudenda; to carnal copulation and impudent whoredom, to adultery and fornication, to onanism, sodomy and bestiality? But this he will not do, the whited sepulchre! (1886 vol.10, pp.253-54)

Suddenly, it seems, Burton's essay ceases to be a documentary of Sotadic "Vice" and turns into a full-blown attack on Victorian hypocrisy. The dramatic change in Burton's narrative exposes a subtle motive to his essay. The circular narrative on which Burton seems to rely in order to reach England (after methodologically touring the world) appears to be meant to highlight the striking *similarity – rather than difference* – in past forms of English literary sexual morality. Burton aims to air his extremely critical view of what he sees as the contemporary hypocritical "fig-leaf modesty". His subtext may be interpreted as a call for the restoration of *The Nights'*

Oriental literary morality, which, as he demonstrates, had in fact once been shared with Britain's own literature.

Thus, Burton's essay on 'Pederasty' is not straightforwardly about the existence of a geo-climatic Sotadic Zone. Quite the opposite, Burton's concept of the Sotadic Zone is a cleverly camouflaged *narrative device* that paradoxically feeds off existing Orientalist perceptions of 'sexual-moral difference' in the aim of deconstructing them. In this light, Burton's "Terminal Essay" is not about reproducing narratives of 'difference'; it is a call for *undoing* them by means of returning to a shared past of literary sexual morality. By juxtaposing his expurgated version of *The Nights* with some of England's equally revealing literature, Burton highlights the hypocritical inconsistency in his Victorian society's moral standards. Resuming his criticism, he singles out the "interested critic of the Edinburgh Review (No. 335 of July, 1886)"; and writes,

I return my warmest thanks for his direct and deliberate falsehoods: – lies are one-legged and short-lived, and venom evaporates. It appears to me that when I show to such men, so "respectable" and so impure, a landscape of magnificent prospects whose vistas are adorned with every charm of nature and art, they point their unclean noses at a little heap of muck here and there lying in a field-corner. (1886 vol.10, p.254)

By ending his essay (on 'Pederasty') with a criticism of Victorian morality, Burton shifts the focus from the subject at hand – Sotadic Zone – and exposes what appears to be one of the essential motives behind producing an unexpurgated edition of *The Arabian Nights*, in whose shadow (literary-based) Oriental sexuality was to be thoroughly analysed and juxtaposed with its European counterpart.

The great irony, of course, is the cultural shift in constructions of literary sexual morality that had been taking place in the *land* (i.e. the Arab world) of *The Arabian Nights* at the time Burton was writing about Arab sexuality. While this shift will be discussed in Chapter Four, I would like now to offer another insight on Burton's scholarly interest in Arab-Oriental sexuality.

Further paradoxical circularities: a triumph of Burton's epistemological approach?

Of course, the overall rationale behind translating an expurgated version of *The Nights* and attaching a frank discussion of sexuality to it – in the "Terminal Essay" – has received attention from critics. For Burton, *The Nights* served as a safer platform to discuss 'Other' sexuality under the guise of scholarly pursuit that is seeking an anthropological understanding

of 'cultural difference'. By the same token, Burton's study of Oriental sexual otherness was also a criticism of what he perceived as Victorian Grundyism. Kennedy argues that Burton's "[...] orientalist stance gave him the emotional and intellectual distance he needed to carry out his critique of British society" (p.321). Kennedy adds, "[...] a major aim [of Burton's comparative discourse on sexuality] was to criticize the moral standards of modern English society by juxtaposing them to the standards of another time or place" (p.328).¹²⁸ Yet, as we have seen, the contemporary "standards" of this 'Other' "place" – the Arab Orient – may not have been accurately represented by Burton's narrative. Even on the level of proportionality, Burton's lengthy (fifty-page) analysis of "Le Vice" does not tally with the rare recurrence of its fictional depiction in the text of *The Nights*.¹²⁹ In this regard, Colligan argues that

The essay's relationship to the translation is parasitical: it relies on it as a host to nourish its ideas, but meanwhile compromises the integrity of the translation. Yet, this parasitical relationship is revealing because it demonstrates the extent to which Burton depended on assumptions about Arab sexuality to elucidate his theory of pederasty. (p.77)

Indeed, the "parasitical" nature of Burton's Section is further highlighted when we realise that Section itself appears to have been written as an independent paper in 1883 – well before Burton's publication of *The Arabian Nights*. In his biography of Burton, Thomas Wright (1906) points out that it was in 1883 when Burton informed John Payne that he had composed a paper "showing the geographical limits of the evil [i.e. pederasty]" and that "I shall publish it some day and surprise the world" (cited in Wright 1906 vol.2, p.42). Choosing to publish the paper as part of *The Nights*' "Terminal Essay" sheds light on the discursive mechanism through which Burton appears to recreate narratives of 'Otherness' and reaffirm the assumptions on which he appears to have relied in the first place – only to paradoxically deconstruct them.

More importantly, it also highlights the narrative *functionality* of the overall *structure* of Burton's work. Beginning with a Foreword, which signposts much of Burton's epistemological discourse, the work proceeds into the mammoth-size, ten-volume translation of the popular Oriental literary classic and ends with the dense, anthropological study of Oriental Arab 'Otherness'. As we have seen, Burton's promotion of his work heavily relied on advancing its epistemological value. He sought to uncover the "valuables" of a widely popular text, whose two-century-old familiarity stands in sharp contrast with the revelations he was keen to make about its depiction of sexuality. In other words, Burton's manipulation (and,

¹²⁸ By "time", Kennedy is also referring to Burton's comparison of literary sexual morality in European and English literature during the medieval period in his "Terminal Essay" – I will be commenting on this shortly.

¹²⁹ For "there are only four homosexual episodes in the *Arabian Nights*" (Colligan, p.77). See Burton's own classification and citation of these episodes towards the end of the Section on 'Pederasty' (1886, pp.252-253).

indeed, deconstruction) of the familiarity of the text exposes his exploitation of its popularity, on which he relied to discuss sexuality. Thus this 'exploitative' element in Burton's structure stems from his (rather paradoxical, yet effective) dependency on a familiar text (as a point of reference) only to de-familiarise it by metaphorically hijacking it from the British public's collective consciousness, hence the thematic and generic displacement of the text as has been discussed above.

Moreover, Burton's integral structural emphasis on amalgamating 'text' and 'experience' can be read in line with his determination to propagate and validate his own (rather unique) approach to epistemology in general and Oriental (Other) sexuality in particular. This determination can be traced back to Burton's time at Oxford, during which his superior linguistic abilities appear to have, quite ironically, contributed to his rejection from (and, indeed, by) the British institution. In this light, it is very significant that Burton starts his paper on 'Pederasty' by relating the Karachi male-brothel episode. As indicated above, it was, once again, to be Burton's linguistic 'difference' that would grant him the privileged and, indeed, unprecedented task of first-hand imperial espionage in the Orient. Brodie (1971) shows how "Burton's special linguistic accomplishments" were the reason why Sir Charles Napier "use[d] him in intelligence work" (p.67).¹³⁰ She points out that Burton's "confidence in having something unique to say was greatly heightened when he began intelligence missions for Sir Charles Napier" (Brodie, p.71). Napier's appointment of Burton can, of course, be seen as an act of *imperial recognition* validating his "unique" approach. The uniqueness of Burton's approach is further highlighted when we realise that, unlike the tradition in India that stipulated "British intelligence officers [...] obtain data from paid native agents" (Brodie, p.72), Burton resorted to his very own methodology, which would typically involve observational first-hand experience. Brodie shows how Burton "chose to violate precedent by going into disguise" (p.72); she continues,

Staining his face with henna and wearing long false hair and a beard, dressed in expensive native garb, he appeared in the bazaars of the Sind cities as Mizra Abdullah of Bushire, a rich merchant, a vendor of fine linen, calicoes and muslins, with jewellery 'reserved for emergencies'. To explain his accent, he professed to be half Arab and half Iranian. Sometimes he rented a shop, furnished it with 'clammy dates, viscid molasses, tobacco, ginger, rancid oil, and strong-smelling sweetmeats,' and sat for days in the market place asking a thousand questions and listening to everything. He conversed with priests and played chess with theologian students; he smoked opium and drank bhang with the addicts. (p.72)

¹³⁰ However, it was Major General Vans-Kennedy, a fine Orientalist, who first recognised Burton's exceptional linguistic abilities when Burton came first in his test in April 1843 in Bombay; see Brodie (p.56).

Brodie explains how Burton's Oriental disguise gave him a truly unique access to a world that had largely been absent from the European colonial consciousness. From attending local parties and entering houses uninvited to having "free access to display his textile", Burton "soon had a store of private histories, domestic scandals, and details of harem life" (Brodie, p.73). Of his own espionage experience, Burton wrote,

The European official in India seldom, if ever sees anything in its real light [...] so dense is the veil which the fearfulness, duplicity, the prejudice and the superstitions of the natives hang before his eyes. And the white man lives a life so distinct from the black, that hundreds of the former serve through what they call their 'term of exile', without once being present at a circumcision feast, a wedding, or a funeral. (cited in Brodie, p.73)

Nonetheless, as Brodie argues, "there was more to Burton's disguise than an imaginative approach to intelligence work. He could in a very real sense act out his own fantasies. The elaborate pretence took courage and acting talent, of which he had an abundance, as well as a thirst for the forbidden, which had been with him since childhood. And he was a tremendous success" (p.73).

Ironically, yet typically perhaps, it was this (partially linguistic-based) "tremendous success" and infantile "thirst for the forbidden" that caught up with Burton from his past to paradoxically give rise to his distinction and his downfall at one and the same time. Upon the successful completion of Burton's report on the male brothels in Karachi, – indeed, an excellent ironic example of imperial espionage-based inquiry into Oriental 'sexual Otherness' – Napier ordered the immediate destruction of the houses.¹³¹ Although Napier did not doubt Burton's moral integrity, he kept Burton's report in his secret file, "where it lay unnoticed for two years" (Brodie, p.77). In 1848, after Napier's resignation, however, "his successor, or one of the officers under him,¹³² maliciously pulled out of the secret file the two-year report on the Karachi brothels and sent it to Bombay [...]. With the [report] went a recommendation that Burton be dismissed from the service" (Brodie, pp.80-81). And so he was. But that was not the end of it, for "his reputation was ruined all the same [...]" (Brodie, p.81).¹³³ Indeed, this very incident gave rise to suspicions concerning Burton's own sexuality. As Brodie points out, many

¹³¹ Citing his diary, Brodie shows how Napier noted "he had improved public morality in the area by 'putting down the infamous beasts who, dressed as women, plied their trade in the Meers' time openly'" (p.77).

¹³² Although it is not clear as to who exactly was responsible for digging out the report and causing Burton's dismissal, Brodie suspects it may have been "either Colonel Corsellis or his superior, General Auchmuty" (p.80). For Burton had fallen out with the Colonel earlier. See Brodie (p.78) for details on the incident.

¹³³ Brodie continues and shows the extent to which Burton's reputation had been damaged: "The faint smell of brimstone – provoked and abhorred – would follow Burton everywhere from India, the rumour that 'something wrong was known' stayed with him all his life, and none of his hundreds of words affectionately detailing the attractiveness of Oriental women would quite erase it (p.82).

believed “that visits to a male bordello automatically meant participation, or that writing about ‘le vice’ proved one to be ‘vicious’” (p.77). The detailed description of Burton’s account has led even contemporary scholars, such as Aldrich (2003) to conclude that, “Burton seemed to enjoy his assignment to the Karachi brothels, which the average male would have shrunk from. More seriously, it seems a reasonable inference that Burton would not have obtained his detailed knowledge of the more lubricious varieties without participating himself” (p.30).

Whether Burton did “participate” or not may remain a matter of speculation. However, the controversy caused by these speculations seems to endow the process in which Burton endeavoured to validate his very own experiential-based approach to knowledge with a further layer of irony. In a sense, his superb manipulation of ‘text’ and ‘experience’ through which he managed to master the local language and replicate the indigenous behaviour – through the Oriental-Muslim persona of the half Arab and half Iranian Mizra Abdullah of Bushire – appears to have turned him, in the eyes of Empire, into a full authentic (participating) Oriental, hence his dismissal from the British imperial service. Paradoxically, the ‘(pre)text’ and the ‘experience’ in Burton’s chosen narrative may have, on this occasion, become inadvertently conflated, resulting in yet another failure at coping (and communicating) with the British institution.

Yet Burton’s choice to make this episode public for the first time since its occurrence forty years earlier is equally significant. It is an attempt to reassert the validity of his epistemological approach through which he revealed an unprecedented version of *The Nights* with notes and a “Terminal Essay”, the production of which is quintessentially based on his very own *textual* and *experiential* relationship with the (Arab) East. After all, Burton’s publication was a tremendously prestigious as well as a financial success. As Kennedy (2000) argues, “For all the controversy it provoked, the *Nights* was an unexpected commercial and critical triumph for Burton. Its limited edition of 1,000 copies was snapped by subscribers, bringing Burton a profit of £10,000” (p.338). More importantly, “Burton received critical acclaim as well. Even his fiercest antagonists acknowledged his formidable learning, and the completion of his herculean literary endeavour confirmed his reputation as one of the greatest orientlists of his age” (Kennedy, p.338). Indeed, as pointed out above, Burton’s very knighthood was bestowed upon him for translating *The Nights* (Colligan, p.56), which, as Kennedy argues, came as a “public recognition of his lifetime accomplishment” (p.338). Thus, to publicly disclose for the first time the distressing Karachi episode, which had given Burton so

much agony and anxiety for forty years,¹³⁴ in his specialised paper on 'Pederasty' is an outspoken metaphorical statement by Burton asserting the validity and triumph of his epistemological approach at large. For the impact of the Karachi-report incident on Burton's self-esteem and attitude towards Empire is not to be underestimated. In his memoir, Burton wrote of what had happened after his dismissal and how it affected him:

I applied in the most suppliant terms to accompany the force as interpreter. I had passed examinations in six native languages, besides studying others, Multani included [the language spoken by the enemy Sikhs] and yet General Auchmuty's secretary wrote to me that this could not be, as he had chosen for the post Lieutenant XYZ who had passed [only] in Hindustani. The last misfortune broke my heart. I had been seven years in India, working like a horse, volunteering for every bit of service, and qualifying myself for all contingencies. [...]. Sick,¹³⁵ sorry almost in tears of rage, I bade adieu to my friends and comrades in Sind. (cited in Brodie, p.81)

The sense of injustice detectable in Burton's words recalls the sentiment he expressed after being laughed at for his demonstrably more fluent linguistic skills at Oxford. Young Burton's rejection from Oxford and its epistemological system resulted in his rigorous self-application to the study of Arabic and other Oriental languages, which he would later use in his imperial (experiential-based) masquerade – an attempt to re-establish communication with Empire – only to be, quite unfairly, rejected again by the British institution.

Nonetheless, the linguistic-based element that was partially responsible for Burton's paradoxical double episode of recognition and disgrace would eventually gain the upper hand and reassert itself. For mature Burton,¹³⁶ would now choose to *publish* and *publicise* not only his (Other) account of the Orient and its sexuality, but also the very *approach* through which he compiled his own discourse of Orientalist epistemology – an approach whose focus (sexuality) and methodology had been inherently at odds with the British institution of the time. Indeed, by including the previously undisclosed story of the Karachi report, Burton was making a strong statement about his personal approach to knowledge. For it is to be remembered that this was an approach that had twice alienated him; yet it was now to be the official and final public and imperial acknowledgement of his epistemological accomplishment, in terms of content and methodology.

¹³⁴ According to Brodie, Burton refrained from disclosing the incident for the forty years (p.76). Even upon his return to England after his dismissal, Burton found it extremely difficult and agonising to break the news to his parents, let alone explain the reason for his dismissal, for his father was, in Burton's words, a "highly moral man" (Brodie, pp.81-82). This, of course, adds to the significance of Burton's disclosure of the report while provocatively discussing the taboo subject of pederasty at the end of the scholarly work that won him his knighthood.

¹³⁵ Burton suffered from rheumatic ophthalmia in 1847; the condition returned after his dismissal adding to his agony for it made it impossible for him to read; see Brodie (pp.78-81).

¹³⁶ That is, the now-established translator and double *Râwî* of *The Nights* and Oriental sexuality.

In what follows, I am going to examine Burton's Oriental persona, Haji Abdullah, in relation to his (other) manipulation of 'text' and 'experience' in his complex execution of *The Kasidah*. I will also explore the significance of Burton's translation of *The Perfumed Garden* (from French) and his later attempt to retrieve its original Arabic manuscript in North Africa towards the end of his life. The aim is to expose the *central* role that 'Other' Oriental sexuality seems to play in *synthesising* Burton's manipulation of 'text' and 'experience' in his use of Orientalism. I would like to show how Burton's Orientalism may have become a (role-model) legacy for later fellow Orientalists with similar textual and experiential entanglements with the Arab East. In essence, I would like to show how elements of Burton's Orientalism – his manipulation of 'text' and 'experience' in the Arab Orient – could be traced in T. E. Lawrence's equally epic interaction with the Arab East. As I will discuss in detail in the upcoming chapters, Lawrence's Orientalism also dwelled on complex manipulations of 'text' and 'experience', which were similarly brought together by a fascination with the 'Unchanging East' and its alleged 'sexual Otherness'.

Masquerades: from the translational to the transitional

The passage from oral to written and back again is much more complex than a simple contrast between literature and orature. *The Arabian Nights*, before their publication, can be placed in this context. The stories did not need to be read from the page to become known. (Warner 2011, p.11)

Arabic is my native tongue. I know it as well as I know English. I know the Arab nature. (Burton, 1885,¹³⁷ cited in Brodie 1971, p.360)

In the conclusion of his Foreword to *The Nights*, Burton thanks the designer of the Arabic ornamentations of the book as well as the calligrapher who wrote "My name, Al-Hajj Abdullah (= the Pilgrim Abdallah) [...]" in Arabic (p.xxiv). Indeed, Burton's Arabic name appears in beautiful calligraphy on the title page of each of the ten volumes of his translation of *The Nights*. Juxtaposed with his full English name, Richard F. Burton, the *two names* boldly claim (the co-authorship of) the work (Figure 1 below).

¹³⁷ The quote originally appeared in *Academy*, 11 July 1885, 19.

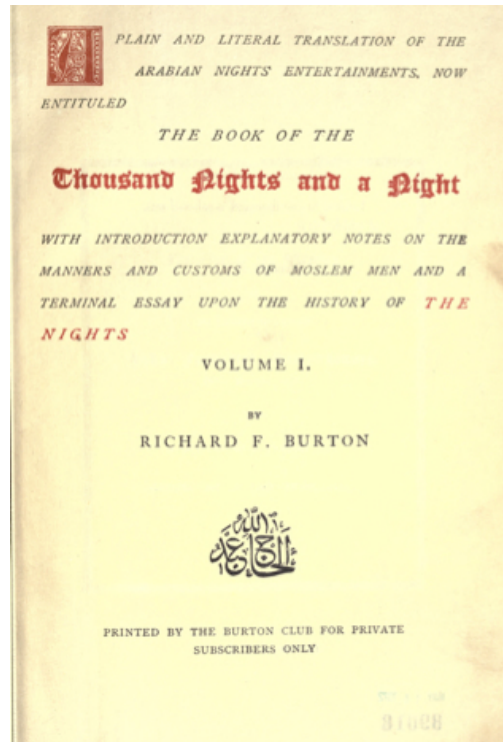


Figure 1: The title page of Burton's edition of *The Nights* (Vol.1).

Al-Hajj Abdullah, also known as Hâjî Abdû,¹³⁸ made his first literary appearance as (co)author in Burton's anonymously published *Kasîdah* (1880). Written in the style of *The Rubâiyyât of Omar Khayyam*¹³⁹ by the Sufist Hâjî Abdû and allegedly translated into English by F.B.,¹⁴⁰ *The Kasîdah* was a complex act of literary masquerade on Burton's part. In its synthesis, Burton relied on a detached form of his *dual (Oriental and Orientalist) literary agency*. In other words, Burton's execution of *The Kasîdah* involved maintaining a distance between his public identity and his two cross-cultural personae, the Oriental Hajji and the Orientalist English translator. Through these two (publicly unacknowledged) literary voices, Burton was able to orchestrate a chorus of Eastern mystic philosophical motifs (the Hajji's) and then discuss them through the translational-comparative narrative of Frank Baker (the translator), hence Burton's complicated detached use of his dual literary agency. Although he never officially claimed *The*

¹³⁸ Of course, 'Abdu' is short for 'Abdullah' in Arabic. Grant (2009) makes the connection between 'Abdullah' and 'Abdu' (pp.81-82)

¹³⁹ *The Rubaiyat* was first translated and published anonymously by Edward FitzGerald (Brodie, p.350). *The Rubaiyat* met with great success (p.350). According to Brodie, Burton was secretly hoping to "see this history repeated with his own *Kasîdah*" (p.350).

¹⁴⁰ F.B., or Frank Baker, is Burton's English nom de plume, which he also used when he wrote *Stone Talk* (Brodie, p.350).

Kasidah, Burton confessed to writing it privately.¹⁴¹ It was later published under his name posthumously by his wife, Isabel.¹⁴² Of course, the Hajj, or ‘Hajj’, is Mizra Abdullah of Bushire, Burton’s old Oriental (Arab-Iranian) persona, whom he impersonated when spying for Napier in Sind, as shown earlier in this chapter. Burton was later to assume the same Oriental persona when he embarked on his Hajj to Mecca on 14 April 1853 (Brodie, p.110), hence the earned title of ‘Al-Hajj’ or ‘Hajj’. *The Pilgrim* (figure 2 below) is an illustration of Hajji Abdullah as depicted in the opening page of *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* (vol.2, 1856).



Figure 2: *The Pilgrim*.

Much has been written about the complexity in which Burton created and developed the persona of Abdullah.¹⁴³ Ben Grant (2009) refers to Abdullah as Burton’s “alter ego” (p.56).

¹⁴¹ In a letter to Leonard Smithers on 2 August 1888, Burton admitted privately that *The Kasidah* was his; he wrote, “The Kasidah is mine after a fashion, but I do not own it before the world, simply because it is tentative and only half of the whole” (Brodie, p.350).

¹⁴² Brodie (1971) and Grant (2009, p.82) show how Isabel Burton was very keen to “dispel any notion that Burton had composed [*The Kasidah*] in imitation of FitzGerald’s magical verse, and insisted that he had written it in 1853 on his return from Mecca, three years before the *Rubāiyāt* appeared” (Brodie, pp.350-51). However, Brodie shows that there is evidence that the poem was written much later in Burton’s life, “when he was well past fifty” (p.351).

¹⁴³ The persona of Abdullah evolved and went through modifications since his first appearance in Sind. The modifications had been largely practical and were designed to suit Burton’s specific espionage needs. For instance, from the Arab-Iranian ‘Mizra’, Abdullah modifies his title to ‘Sheikh’ and parentage to ‘Pāthan’, an Indian of Afghani background, when transiting in Egypt and learning about the Sunni-Shia tensions in Mecca. See Burton’s *Pilgrimage* (1885, p.11, pp.44-45). Parama Roy points out the significance of Burton’s title change (from ‘Mizra’ to ‘Sheikh’),

He points out that the first appearance of Abdullah was in a Postscript in Burton's *Falconry in the Valley of the Indus* (1852) in which Burton recorded his observations of the "Scindian people" as well as the details of his assumption of the persona of the 'henna-stained' Oriental (pp.56-62). As we have seen, assuming the persona of Abdullah marked Burton's espionage style out and gave him an unprecedented first-hand 'native's' insight into Oriental society. For Abdullah enabled Burton to uncompromisingly observe the Other – without having to rely on 'native informers' – by *becoming* him. Grant argues that, "[...] through adopting the persona and name of Abdullah, Burton, magically, does not have to choose between one side and another, one religion and another, one dress and another, one skin colour and another, but can now authentically appear on both sides of the border at once, as Burton and Abdullah" (2009, p.68).

The fluidity between the two subjectivities might be what tempted Burton to reassume Abdullah's Oriental persona on his second masquerade-inclined mission in the Orient; that is, his Hajj trip (via Egypt) in 1853. Thus, the second appearance of Abdullah was in Burton's *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah & Meccah* (1855-56).¹⁴⁴ As in Sind, Abdullah was the embodiment of Burton's (experiential) metamorphosis from a European into an Oriental. In his detailed study of Burton's self-encryption in the disguise of Abdullah,¹⁴⁵ Grant argues that, "[...] Abdullah becomes, as a way of understanding by empathy, the [Oriental] speaker and actor, while Burton is the [English] eye and pen" (p.77). This distinction also applies to Burton's literary depiction of his own dual subjectivity in his masqueraded interaction with the Orient at large.

Remarkably, until *The Kasîdah's* (anonymous) publication in 1880, Abdullah's character, observations and actions had been narrated through Richard Burton, himself, the English writer. *The Kasîdah*, however, marks a departure in Burton's use of his *dual literary agency*. For *The Kasîdah* is Burton's first attempt to give his Eastern "alter ego" a *sole*, distinct

which indicates his conversion from Shia to Sunni (cited in Grant 2009, p.70-71). Significantly, by the time Burton writes *The Kasîdah*, The Hajji's name transforms to Hajî Abdû el-Yezdi, who according to Frank Baker (the translator) is "A native, it is believed, of Darâbghird in the Yezd Province, he always preferred to style himself El-Hichmakâni, a facetious 'lackab' or surname, meaning 'Of No-hall, Nowhere'" (Burton 1880, p.109). Indeed, the Hajji's rootlessness seems to mirror Burton's own, as I will show later.

¹⁴⁴ As indicated earlier, *Falconry* was Burton's first work in which the persona of Abdullah features as a character. Abdullah was to appear again as a character in *Personal Narrative*. In *The Kasîdah*, however, Abdullah is no longer a character; he becomes the author-narrator while Burton himself disappears behind the mask of the Orientalist translator-commentator, Frank Baker, hence the evolutionary journey of the persona of Abdullah from character to author. "Outside of these works," Grant points out, Abdullah's "name haunts Burton's text, as he compulsively signed letters to his friends with the signature of Abdullah, written in Arabic" (2009, p.56).

¹⁴⁵ See Grant's third chapter, "En-crypt-ing: Burton / Abdullah" (2009, pp.56-88). The chapter offers a detailed analysis of Burton's complex masquerade techniques and his use of the persona of Abdullah.

literary voice of his own as the *Oriental* (Sufi)¹⁴⁶ author of the poem, while camouflaging his own *Orientalist* (commentator's) English voice with an extra layer of masquerade (the alleged translator, Frank Baker). Of course, much has been written about the intriguingly complex execution of Burton's *Kasîdah*. While Brodie (1971) considers it "[...] his finest poem, ... [which], unlike most of his writings [...] was honed and polished and [represented] a skilful rendering of his own philosophy" (p.349), Roger Ingpen argues that "[i]t is the confession of faith of a modern Westerner steeped in the learning and mysticism of the East; a replica thus of Burton himself" (pp.17-18).¹⁴⁷ For his part, Grant observes that "In choosing to present his Sufist kasîdah as a translation, [...], Burton splits the 'I' who speaks in this passage: Abdû is now the Sufi poet, and F.B. his translator, so that Burton, the single writer, constructs himself as having a double identity and a double voice" (2009, p.82). He continues to point out that, "[...] Abdû can be read as Burton's theatrical construction of himself, as an Eastern figure of course, but also as multilinguist and polymath [...]" (p.83).

The Kasîdah is a fine example of Burton's detached (schizophrenic?) use of two literary agencies, the Oriental, Abdullah, and the Orientalist translator, F.B. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that despite Burton's unprecedented acknowledgement of the Oriental Hajji's voice and single-handed authorship of *The Kasîdah* (by attributing the alleged original Oriental text to him), his conscious self-detachment from the work – by not claiming it in public – is equally significant. Indeed, *The Kasîdah* is an act of detached authorship *par excellence*. While elements of Burton's literary agency take credit for the work, Burton's public figure – as writer and translator – disowns it.¹⁴⁸

In contrast to this incomplete recognition of the Eastern writer in him, Burton does, however, acknowledge the *co-authorship* of his translation of *The Arabian Nights* publicly. As shown above, Burton's *two names* (the English and the Oriental-Arabic) appear clearly and rather proudly in both languages on the title page of his translation as though to signify and *certify* his successful role as a double "*Râwî*", (i.e. orator/storyteller), and translator. This, of course, is an act of public pronouncement and declaration of his dual literary agency, the Oriental and the Orientalist (un-masqueraded) public figure. In her analysis of the relationship

¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, Burton himself had officially been ordained a Master Sufi while in Sind; he also memorized a quarter of the Quran (Brodie, p.79).

¹⁴⁷ Roger Ingpen wrote an introduction for a posthumously published edition of *The Kasîdah*, which I have used in this study. Unfortunately, the edition does not have a date of publication. However, the edition's other bibliographic details have been listed along with Burton's other works in the bibliography. I have used the original date of publication, 1880, to reference the poem and any quotes from the book.

¹⁴⁸ Brodie suggests that one of the reasons that kept Burton from publically claiming *The Kasîdah* may have had to do with its disappointing reviews (p.350).

between the oral recitation and the publication of *The Arabian Nights*, Warner points out, “The passage from oral to written and back again is much more complex than a simple contrast between literature and orature” (2011, p.11). Surely, this “passage” is complex enough in one language. Nonetheless, Burton has proven to be a successful double “*Ràwi*” (to the Arabs and the English) and translator, with a radical new translation revealing the hidden “valuables” in an otherwise well-trodden “familiar” literary classic. As we have seen, much of Burton’s distinctiveness as an Orientalist stems from his ‘Other’ epistemological approach to the Arab East in which he manipulates the relationship between ‘text’ and ‘experience’. *Becoming* an Oriental, only if temporarily, was the manifestation of this manipulation. It was also this metamorphosis that would give rise to Burton’s Oriental literary agency in the distinct voice of the Hajji, hence the significance of its public acknowledgement in *The Nights*.

Key to the success of this metamorphosis, of course, is Burton’s knowledge of the Arabic language – a language, which had marked out his epistemological ‘difference’ from the beginning of his ‘formal’ education and intellectual pursuit at Oxford. In 1885, more than forty years after making his choice to pursue the “[un]conventional field” of Arabic, Burton referred to Arabic as “my native tongue. I know it as well as I know English. I know the Arab nature”. Of course, it is his knowledge of this language that had enabled him to translate its literary *texts* into English, hence his *Orientalist literary agency*. Yet, his ‘knowledge’ of the “Arab nature” was also communicated and expressed through his *experiential* impersonation of his Oriental “alter ego”, the Hajji. In this light, Burton’s public acknowledgement of *The Nights*’ co-authorship is not merely a pronouncement of his dual literary agency; it is also a statement of public validation of his own *approach* to Eastern epistemology. This approach, as we have seen, would be further recognised nationally by the very institution with which Burton had been long in conflict due to his perceived eccentricity, non-conformism and ‘difference’. This, in turn, may shed light on a (subtler) paradox as far as the appreciation of Burton’s genius is concerned. It seems that Burton’s genius was publicly appreciated only when he spelled its *hybrid* components out, quite literally, by spelling out his dual subjectivity – his English and Arabic names – doubly claiming the title of the book which culminated in the imperial bestowal of his knighthood.

Yet the importance of *The Arabian Nights* in Burton’s oeuvre is not limited to its importance in revealing his double literary agency. For his involvement with the ‘magical text’ may have left him under its spell. Burton’s role as a double “*Ràwi*” in *The Nights* can offer an interesting insight into his narrative and the way he manipulates the relationship between

‘text’ and ‘experience’ in the Arab East. This, I intend to further analyse in line with Marina Warner’s intriguing critique of the “magical thinking” that *The Nights’* storytellers are inevitably involved in. Analysing the “dynamics of storytelling in *Alf Layla wa-Layla*” in relation to their literary underpinnings of “magical thinking” as well as the relationship between art and reality, Warner (2011, p.27) dwells on the complex role of the “writer/storyteller”; she writes,

[...] the storytelling dynamics of *Alf Layla wa-Layla* are underpinned by a [...] form of magical thinking. This casts the writer/storyteller first as Shahrazad, whose art prevents harm falling on her own head and on all her sisters, under threat from the Sultan’s decree and thus grants the story cycle itself charming powers. But secondly, the *Nights* inspires a way of thinking about writing and the making of literature as forms of exchange across time – dream journeys in which the maker fuses with what is being made, until the artefact exercises in return its own fashioning force. Both of these principles draw away from the prevalent idea of art as mimesis, representing the world in a persuasive, true-to-life way, and emphasise instead the agency of literature. Stories need not report on real life, but clear the way to changing the experience of living it. (p.27)

I would like to explore the ways in which Burton’s role and narrative may be analogous to *The Nights’* storyteller/writer in Warner’s critique above. In other words, I would like to show how, in his capacity as both “*Ràwi*” and translator (i.e. co-writer of the English text) of *The Nights*, Burton appears to have been subject to *The Nights’* “form of magical thinking”. To begin with, Burton’s role as a “*Ràwi*” places him on an equal footing with Shahrazad, the original ‘*Ràweya*’ (i.e. female storyteller) of the Arabian tales. Like her, Burton put himself in great jeopardy while relating accounts of Arab sexuality, which, despite the serious risk of prosecution,¹⁴⁹ delivered him to glory – i.e. personal and public recognition. At the end of the book, Shahrazad marries the King, Shahrayar; she puts an end to his tyrannical misogyny by restoring his faith in womankind.¹⁵⁰ Burton, on the other hand, appears to reconcile the two literary voices in him (the Oriental’s and the Orientalist’s) and restores a degree of (due) respect and appreciation from the British institution, which officially recognises the (previously rejected)

¹⁴⁹ Brodie (1971) highlights the serious risk Burton was taking in translating and publishing what was deemed as overtly explicit works, even when in private. She points out that The Obscene Publications Act was passed in 1857; in its first 159 prosecutions, the Society for the Suppression of Vice managed was successful in all but 5 (p.367). She also points out Burton’s defiance; challenging the risk of being prosecuted, he once said, “I don’t care a button about being prosecuted [...] and if the matter comes to a fight I will walk into court with my Bible and Shakespeare and my Rabelais under my arm, and prove to them that, before they condemn me, they must cut half of *them* out” (pp.390-301). She concludes that, “one suspects that he would have loved his day in court” (p.391). Nonetheless, the risk was very real. Burton’s wife, Isabel, was particularly dismayed at his decision to go back to translate more explicit foreign works (Latin and Arabic) towards the end of his life. She wrote to Leonard Smithers on 16 May 1899 expressing her worry about the possibility that Burton might ruin “an honourable career of 49 years” by risking being prosecuted; see Isabel’s letter in Brodie (p.405).

¹⁵⁰ For the King’s misogyny stems from his first wife’s infidelity.

epistemological value of his approach. Both storytellers appear to somehow rectify a fallacy and restore a sense of poetic justice and wider reconciliation.

More importantly, however, Burton's translational discourse appears to adhere to Warner's second point; namely, *The Nights'* inspiration of "a way of thinking about writing and making of literature". Indeed, nowhere is the fantastical and generic displacement of fiction and non-fiction clearer than it is in Burton's discursive amalgamation of 'text' and 'experience' in the "Terminal Essay". Moreover, this is also evident in Burton's (the "maker's") complex fusion "with the artefact" (the text) via the Oriental subjectivity of Abdullah. Equally, this 'fusion' can also be recognised in Burton's official enunciation of both of his literary agencies by co-signing the translation with both of his names. Furthermore, Burton's narrative seems to fulfil the last point in Warner's argument; that is, the anti-mimetic reproduction of the relationship between art (fiction) and life (anthropological observations) in the Arab Orient. For this, too, can be observed in Burton's rendering of the "Terminal Essay's" anthropological significance, which, as we have seen, was *not* necessarily a "true-to-life" description of contemporary Arab society as he would have wanted his audiences to believe. Indeed, Burton was being largely anti-mimetic in his (literary and anthropological) depiction/analysis of contemporary Arab sexual morality, hence his fulfilment of the clauses of Warner's reflection on the abilities of *The Nights'* "magical thinking".

Nonetheless, the impact of *The Nights'* "magical thinking" on Burton appears to have lasted beyond his involvement in the text. For his fascination with Arab 'Other' sexuality in general and pederasty in particular continues and becomes rather obsessive towards the end of his life. This obsession was behind Burton's final trip to Muslim land, Tunis and Algiers, in 1889-90, the year he died, in search for the Arabic manuscript of *The Perfumed Garden*, a sixteenth-century Arab sex manual written by Sheikh Nefzaoui.¹⁵¹ Burton had already translated the Tunisian Sheikh's work from Isadore Liseux's pirated and incomplete French copy in 1886 (Brodie, p.377).¹⁵² The aim of Burton's trip was to locate the original Arabic manuscript, which was supposed to contain an alleged twenty-first chapter on 'Pederasty'; this chapter was missing from Liseux's copy (Brodie, p.377).

¹⁵¹ According to Burton, the Sheikh lived in Tunis and was an extremely learned man, who was made Cadi – a Muslim judge – by the Bey of Tunis; Burton suggests that the sex treatise may have been written around "the year 925 of the Hegira" (Burton 1995, p.9).

¹⁵² This was the third translation in a series of secret publications that were issued by the Kama Shashtra Society (Brodie, p.377). *The Perfumed Garden* was originally translated into French in 1850 and then printed secretly in 1876, and again pirated and reprinted in 1886 by Isadore Liseux; it was the Liseux copy that Burton translated (Brodie, p.377).

Burton's notes from his translation of the French copy demonstrate great admiration for the Eastern sage's interdisciplinary "erudition". He especially celebrates the Sheikh's sexual enlightenment and his "praiseworthy" role of sharing his knowledge and enlightening the public (1995, p.10). He writes: "One need only glance at the book to be convinced that its author was animated by the most praiseworthy intentions, and that, far from being in fault, he deserves gratitude for the services he has rendered to humanity" (1995, p.10). Clearly, Burton appears to identify with the Eastern sage. This sense of identification is even clearer when Burton associates the Sheikh's "serious" approach with his own; he writes, "But what makes this treatise unique as a book of its kind, is the seriousness with which the most lascivious and obscene matters are presented. It is evident that the author is convinced of the importance of his subject, and that the desire to be of use to his fellowmen is the sole motive of his efforts" (1995, p.10). Indeed, this is very much reminiscent of Burton's self-envisaged image as "an agent of enlightenment" *vis-à-vis* the agents of Victorian Grundyism, as has been pointed out earlier in this chapter. He goes further to explicitly demand praise for an author who has "surrounded himself with the lights of former savants"; otherwise, "it would be ingratitude", he warns, "not to acknowledge the benefit which his books have conferred upon people who were still in their infancy in the art of love" (1995, p.11). Burton ends his translator's notes by stressing the epistemological value of the Sheikh's work, and, thus, further emphasising his affinity to the Oriental sage; he writes, "However, this may be, the book contains much useful information and a large number of curious cases, and I have undertaken the translation because, as Sheikh Nefzaoui says in his preamble: 'I swear before God, certainly! the knowledge of this book is necessary. It will be only the shamefully ignorant, the enemy of all science, who does not read it, or who turns it into ridicule'" (p.11). The criticism of "the enemy of all science" is of course, Burton's implicit reference to his own enemies, the figures of Victorian Grundyism.

However, Burton's only critical observation of the current version of the Sheikh's treatise (Liseux's incomplete French copy) is the lamentable absence of a specific "taste"; he writes,

It is only to be regretted that his work, so complete in many respects, is defective in so far as it makes no mention of a custom too common with the Arabs not to deserve particular attention. I speak of the taste so universal with the old Greeks and Romans, namely, the preference they give to a boy before a woman, or even to treat the latter as a boy. (1995, p.11)

In his notes in the Appendix to the Autograph Edition, Burton later speculates on reasons as to why the current copy did not contain material on pederasty (Burton 1995, 157). He concludes

the Appendix by announcing that, “To the Arabophile who would wish to produce a better translation the way is left open; and in perfecting the work he is free to uncover the unknown beauties of the twenty-first chapter to his admiring contemporaries” (1995, 159). Eerily, Burton was somehow anticipating his last (sexually and epistemologically-inclined) venture in the Arab Orient.

Despite his deteriorating health, Burton embarks on a trip to Tunis and Algiers in December 1889 in search of the original complete Arabic manuscript of *The Perfumed Garden* (Brodie, p.407).¹⁵³ He was hoping to retranslate it and rename it *The Scented Garden*. Unfortunately, the exact outcome of his final Orientalist epistemological endeavour is not clear – thanks to his wife’s literary holocaust in which she destroyed much of his unpublished work, including the manuscript of what was to become *The Scented Garden*.¹⁵⁴ While it is uncertain whether Burton managed to locate the alleged twenty-first chapter on pederasty, his research was to amount to a 1282-page manuscript of notes and translations.¹⁵⁵ Colligan argues that the chapter was not found; nonetheless, Burton compensated for its absence with other material on sodomy (p.81). Brodie shows how Burton’s search “proved disappointing. ‘I have done little with the Garden at Tunis where I expected so much,’ he reported to Smithers on 5 January 1890” (Brodie, p.407). However, despite these setbacks, Burton was adamant about finishing what he had started. Brodie observes that “it became increasingly important to him” (p.407). Burton would also admit that, “I have put my whole life and all my life-blood into that *Scented Garden*; it is my great hope that I shall live by it. It is the crown of my life” (cited in Brodie, p.407). After all, he managed to (re)produce a two-volume manuscript. Even Isabel, despite burning it, would still pay tribute to his obsessive scholarly work on it; she describes how she “fetched the manuscript and laid it on the ground before me, two large volumes’ worth ... It was his *magnum opus*, his last work that he was so proud of, that was to have been finished on the awful morrow – that never came ...” (cited in Brodie, p.411-12).

¹⁵³ Isabel accompanied Burton on this trip. The couple were living in Trieste where Burton had been British consul. From North Africa, Burton wrote to Leonard Smithers on 10 December 1889, “Being among the Moslems again is a repose to me. Christendom demoralises and distresses me” (cited in Brodie, p.407). Leonard Smithers, of course, was hoping to publish Burton’s new work upon completion.

¹⁵⁴ Isabel Burton was particularly troubled by the manuscript of *The Scented Garden*. Although she was offered 6000 guineas for it, she was adamant about destroying it. She was concerned about her husband’s reputation; see Brodie (pp.411-12).

¹⁵⁵ Colligan (2006) and Brodie (1971, p.407) agree on the total length of the burnt manuscript. In Colligan’s words, had it survived, the content of the 1282 pages of the translation “would have consisted of 882 pages of text and footnotes, 100-page preface, 200-page treatise on homosexuality, and another 100 pages of excursus for a total of 1282 pages” (p.81).

It is significant that Burton's search for and obsession with the alleged chapter was originally based on unconfirmed rumours of its existence.¹⁵⁶ Colligan (2006, p.80) links Burton's determination to find the rumoured chapter to his strong assumptions about Arab men's desire. She writes, "Because he presupposes the Arab male's preference for boys, the translator is surprised not to discover it in the text" (p.80). She argues that Burton is simply "Unable to accept that these omissions [may be] arbitrary, [...]" (p.80). Indeed, Burton's last epistemological endeavour in the Arab East was his final attempt to extract accounts of 'Other sexuality' where they would be *perceived* to exist. Colligan offers an interesting insight into his trip and suggests it is in line with the Anglo-French colonial rivalry at the time; she writes,

Burton seized *The Scented Garden* from the Arabs in order to discuss sodomy, but he also confiscated the text from the French who had first discovered and translated it. Thus, his translation could be best described as an act of double appropriation. His discussion of anal sex not only revolves around assumptions about Arab sexuality, but also around British competition with the French over knowledge and control of this sexuality. (p.82)

While I agree with Colligan's view, I would like to add that this act of "double appropriation" also stems from Burton's identification with the Tunisian medieval Sheikh. As pointed out above, Burton does indeed seem to see his own scholarly pursuits as reflections of those of the Arab sage. Just as the Sheikh was an Enlightener for his sixteenth-century "people who were still in their infancy in the art of love" (Burton, p.11), Burton too was aiding the British public in "slowly but surely emancipating itself from the prurient reticence and the prudish and immoral modesty of the sixteenth century" (cited in Brodie, p.394).

It is important to emphasise the Arab-Muslim origin of Burton's source for enlightenment. Much of Burton's own literary fame springs from his translational work, which also formed the basis of his 'Other' epistemological Orientalist discourse. In this regard, Brodie contends,

If he could not be a poet or philosopher, he could at least as translator assume for a time the mantle of authorship and temporarily share an identity. In the last weeks before his death he had become the Arab Shaykh Nefzawi, the wise and compassionate but also virile and earthly scholar of the *Scented Garden* instructing in the art of love. (p.427)

If we accept Brodie's contention, the *literary* basis – or *agency* – of this 'becoming' must be highlighted. For Burton becomes the Sheikh through the act of *reproducing* the original literary

¹⁵⁶ Citing Lovell, Colligan points out that Burton "wrote to Liseux in 1887 in hope in of discovering the translator of the autograph edition – the one who first referred to the missing chapter. Unable to find information in Europe, he then travelled to Algiers and Tunis in 1889 in order to locate the original manuscript and in anticipation of plundering its sodomitical passages" (p.81).

text in full. It is interesting that Abdullah's persona has not been associated with Burton's reproduction of *The Scented Garden*. Whether or not Burton mentioned (or indeed assumed the persona of) Abdullah in the burnt manuscript may never be known. Nonetheless, Burton's final literary pilgrimage to the Arab-Muslim Orient marks a point of departure in his use of Orientalism. Despite the little evidence of the manuscript's existence, Burton appears to have been seduced by a mirage – much of which is his own (re)production.

Furthermore, Burton's later-life (post-*Nights*) increasing obsession with translating "naughty books" (Brodie, p.402),¹⁵⁷ which arguably reached its zenith in his quest for *The Scented Garden*,¹⁵⁸ eerily conjures up Warner's speculation on *The Nights*' enchantment upon its storytellers. From "grant[ing] the story cycle [of Arab pederasty] charming powers", to continuing the narration of "Stories [that] need not report on real life, but clear the way to changing the experience of living it", Burton's attempt at reproducing the alleged missing manuscript can be read as a continuation of *The Nights*' stimulation of "magical thinking". For Burton appears to have been chasing a mirage of an Oriental text that may not have existed. Nonetheless, he still managed to reproduce a two-volume work whose burnt ashes seem quite paradoxically to perpetuate the mirage-like perception of the alleged work. Burton's identification with the Oriental Sheikh, from whom he drew his epistemological authority, is also relevant. For the two "become" metaphorically one and "fuse" in the translational (re)production of *The Scented Garden*, "the artefact". This shared sense of the "agency of literature" ties in with Warner's remarks on the anti-mimetic abilities of the storyteller, which, as we have seen, has indeed enabled Burton to "draw away from the prevalent idea of art as mimesis".

Although the manuscript did not survive to show what Burton had actually reproduced, its legacy outlived Burton himself and was the catalyst for what Colligan calls "the international coterie of wealthy homosexuals who travelled to North Africa" (p.86). Colligan shows how opportunistic publishers tried to capitalise on Burton's death by attempting to get their hands on his unpublished manuscripts and translations. However, they had to face Isabel's resistance (pp.84-85). Even when the manuscript of *The Scented Garden* was burnt, a group of publishers were caught out in a scheme trying to use Burton's name and fame. By imitating Burton's Orientalist style, they were planning to fake a translation of *The Scented*

¹⁵⁷ Brodie shows how Burton's appetite for translating sexually explicit works expanded after finishing the six volumes of the *Supplemental Nights* in 1888 (p.403). See Burton's cooperation with Leonard Smithers to translate Italian and Latin works in Brodie (p.403-06).

¹⁵⁸ It is significant that *The Perfumed Garden* was "more pornographic" than the *Kama Sutra* (Brodie, p.377).

Garden and publish it secretly under his name posthumously (Colligan, p.83-85).¹⁵⁹ This goes to demonstrate the ability of Burton's legacy to perpetuate perceptions that are paradoxically based on perceptions. Indeed, once more, "the artefact exercises in return its own fashioning force."

After all, Burton's legacy lies in his ability to manipulate the relationship between 'text' and 'experience' in the Arab Orient in order to demonstrate the possibility of 'Other' ways of being and acting in the world. Using the agency of literature, Burton's Orientalism draws on narratives that appear to recalibrate the art-life relational equation. From displacing the fictional genre of *The Arabian Nights*, to 'translating' an Oriental poem that never existed – *The Kasîdah* –, Burton's approach to the Orient proved enabling in so many ways. It turns the Arab Orient into an Orientalist's canvas onto which Orientalist imagination may project (and fulfil) otherwise impossible fantasies.

All the same, however, the significance of Burton's contribution to Orientalist discourse on Arab 'Other' sexuality remains *dual*. For the legacy of his *translational* approach positions him *transitionally* in what was to become, in Colligan's (p.87) words, "the winter migration of European homosexuals" to North Africa. Colligan shows how Burton's "underground translations", which served as "sexual guidebooks", were "likely indirectly behind the infamous encounter between Oscar Wilde and André Gide in Algiers in 1895" (p.86).¹⁶⁰ In this light, it is important to position Burton as a *transitional figure* in relation to later Orientalists,¹⁶¹ who started descending upon the Orient in the wake of the expanding European imperial encroachment (and political intervention) in the region at the *fin de siècle* and beyond. In 1909, for instance, two Orientalists were roaming the width and breadth of the Arab Orient in search for their own (homosexually-inclined) epistemological narratives. While T. E. Lawrence was exploring archaeological sites in the Mashriq, Aleister Crowley was experimenting with "sex magic" in the Maghreb. Not unlike Burton, both figures combined the use of literary agency in their experiential interaction with the Arab East. The latter (i.e.

¹⁵⁹ Peter Jones was one of those involved in the scheme; he wrote to Smithers giving details as to how he might fake the translation by imitating Burton's style in *The Nights* (Colligan, p.84-85). Colligan explains: "In an illustration of his overarching interest in the homosexual content of Burton's work, Jones even followed Burton's footsteps by visiting Tunis and Algiers in search of the missing chapter. Jones and his co-schemers thus followed Burton's programme of appropriating Arab erotica with the belief that homosexual practices defined Arab sexuality" (p.85).

¹⁶⁰ See Colligan (pp.86-87) and Owen (p.115) for more details on the encounter as well as other European sexual dissidents who may have been influenced by Burton.

¹⁶¹ Of course, this is not to detract from the importance of other prominent Orientalists who had been to the Arab East and whose works had influenced others to follow in their footsteps. As indicated in Chapter One, Alexander William Kinglake and Charles Montagu Doughty are, of course, the main forefathers of the tradition of Anglo-Arab travel writing. However, as Orientalist depictions of Arab sexuality and homoerotic desire form a central theme in my thesis, I have chosen to focus on Burton's and Lawrence's narratives.

Crowley), however, appears to have been almost literal in his manifestation of Warner's theory concerning the anti-mimetic role of the "agency of literature".

Dubbed "the wickedest man in the world" (Owen 1997, p.99), Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) was fascinated by "ceremonial sex magic" (p.100). He founded the magical Order of the Silver Star after abandoning the Hermeneutic Order of Golden Dawn (p.103). He knew some Arabic (p.104) and had a passion for North Africa (p.99); he was well read in Orientalist literature depicting the Arabian desert (p.113). Crowley became notorious for his "sex magic" experiment in the Algeria desert (p.103). Importantly, Crowley was a passionate admirer of Burton;¹⁶² he read him extensively and had wanted to model himself on him since he was a child (p.113).¹⁶³ Crowley went with his younger partner and chela, Victor Neuburg, to the Algerian desert in 1909. The two men practised sodomitical sex as part of a magical rite (pp.107-108).¹⁶⁴ Needless to say, Burton's influence on Crowley was behind much of the latter's Orientalist perception of the limitless potentiality of the Arab Orient. In Owen's words, "[...] if there is a subtext for Crowley's North African adventure, indeed, for all his travels, it was the life and work of the Victorian adventurer and explorer, Richard Burton" (p.113). Crowley's plot does, once again, invoke Warner's argument about the power of the "agency of literature" – a power that has been evidently manifested by Burton's complex use of Orientalism.

The use of literary agency while drawing on epistemological narratives *to* and *from* the Arab Orient also characterises the Orientalist discourse of the subject of my next chapter, T. E. Lawrence. Drawing on his manipulation of 'text' and 'experience', I am going to throw light on "the blond Bedouin's" (Thomas 1962, p.25) use of masquerade in his interaction with (and reproduction of) the Arab East. I will show how Lawrence's Orientalist endeavour is further complicated by the expanding political encroachment of the British Empire in the region and his *dual* role in it as an official agent of Empire and partial instigator and director of the Arab Revolt. Unlike Burton, however, Lawrence had the direct and official support of the British Empire in his duplicate (and duplicitous?) Orientalist endeavour in the Arab East. Moreover, Lawrence's direct involvement in the Arab Revolt – the military manifestation of anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism – inevitably links him with the ideological discourse of the Arab nationalist

¹⁶² Interesting, Crowley may have also been attracted to Burton's "Satanic aura" (Owen, p.113). In fact, according to the Earl of Dunraven, Burton "prided himself on looking like Satan – as, indeed, he did" (cited in Brodie, p.13). Burton had also considered writing a biography of Satan (Brodie, p.13).

¹⁶³ Burton "was one of the three men to whom Crowley dedicated his *Confessions*" (Owen, p.113).

¹⁶⁴ On Mount Da'leh, Crowley was to "sacrifice" himself, which meant that he was to be "sodomized" by Neuburg, who would impersonate god Pan, the man-goat (pp.107-108).

movement. Part of this ideology stipulated the cultural changes towards perceptions of literary sexual morality in the Arab world in the *fin de siècle* and beyond. These changes will be further discussed in Chapter Four, of course. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to consider Lawrence's complex and controversial role in 'experientially' (i.e. militarily) enacting some (but not all) of the 'textual' (i.e. ideological) narratives of Arab nationalism while reproducing his own version of it in his masterpiece, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Lawrence's book will inform much of my analysis of his self-fashioned complex subjectivity in one of the most epic military and political campaigns in the region.

Chapter Three:

Chivalric Fantasies and Homoerotic Romance in the Desert

The Arab Orient between Burton's *Arabian Nights* and T. E. Lawrence, 'the Arabian Knight'



Figure 3: *Robes for a Prince*: "Lawrence in 1917 in the white robes of a sharif with golden hilted dagger, a costume which immediately suggested to the Arabs that he was a man of wealth and authority" (James 1996). The original photograph is in the Imperial War Museum, London.

A madman in the East, like a notably eccentric character in the west, is allowed to say and do whatever the spirit directs. (Burton, cited in Brodie 1971, p.109)

A stranger must, indeed, have something extraordinary about him to attract attention in the streets of the Holy City. But as this young Bedouin passed by in his magnificent royal robes, the crowds in front of the bazaars turned to look at him. It was not merely his costume, nor yet the dignity with which he carried his five feet three, marking him every inch a king or perhaps a caliph in disguise who had stepped out of the pages of 'The Arabian Nights'. The striking fact was that this mysterious prince of Mecca looked no more like a son of Ishmael than an Abyssinian looks like one of Stefansson's red-haired Esquimaux; Bedouin, although of the Caucasian race, have had their skins scorched by the relentless desert sun until their complexions are the colour of lava. But this young man was as blond as a Scandinavian, in whose veins flow Viking blood and the cool traditions of fjords and sagas. (Thomas 1962, pp.19-20)

Burton's statement above could be an allusion to himself. Little did he know that it would also prophetically apply to his imperial successor, T. E. Lawrence (1888-1935). Known for his role in the Arab Revolt (1916-18),¹⁶⁵ Lawrence was an eccentric adventurer, whose unorthodoxy would somehow manage to gain and combine the support of Britain as well as the Arabs. Unlike Burton, however, not only did Lawrence's Arabian adventure transcend the pages of 'text' into the realm of observational 'experience', but it also took centre stage by enacting a predetermined vision of a literary-based chivalric fantasy.¹⁶⁶ Burton used Orientalism primarily

¹⁶⁵ Lawrence was Britain's imperial agent in its war against the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. As the Ottoman Empire joined the First World War on the German side, the British and the French (the Allies) made the strategic choice of supporting the Arab Revolt, which can be seen as the culmination of decades of anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism. By supporting the Arabs, the Allies were able to gain the crucial – insider's – help of the Arab subjects of the Ottoman Empire. The Revolt itself had the ambition to restore the Caliphate to 'Arab hands', although this aim was not necessarily shared by the more secular strands of anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism. While the Arab nationalist movement will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter, it is important to point out that the promise of British support was essential for the Revolt's instigation in Arabia by the Sharif Hussein of Mecca. James Barr (2007) shows how the British became increasingly concerned over the Ottoman Sultan's declaration of Jihad, which might "avert a Muslim insurrection in Egypt and India, which would divert British forces from the crucial Western Front" (p.3). So "They decided to intervene in Arabian tribal politics and foment a revolt designed to divide Islam by giving the Hijaz – the holiest region of the Muslim world – its independence" (2007, p.3). Interestingly this decision came after initially ignoring Sharif Hussein's earlier appeal. For Britain had been supportive of the Sultan's role as a 'Caliph'; that is, the spiritual leader for all Muslim subjects, including the ones in its colonies. (Barr, pp.10-11)

¹⁶⁶ Many critics have drawn a connection between Lawrence's passion for medieval chivalric literature and culture and his role in co-leading the Arab Revolt. Dawson (1994) draws on Martin Green's suggestion that "Lawrence's vision of himself as hero' derived from medieval chivalric romance" (p.192). He continues to point out that since his childhood, Lawrence "had harboured 'chivalric' fantasies of leading the great but fallen Arab people in a 'crusade' for freedom" (p.192). Lawrence's fantasies will be further analysed in this chapter in light of a range of critics' research. However, I use the term 'chivalric fantasy' more broadly in order to encapsulate Lawrence's articulation of his self-fashioning as an Anglo-Arabian knight in the Arab Revolt. While certain aspects of Lawrence's expression of 'chivalry' will be analysed in further detail in this chapter and the next, I do not intend to go into an exhaustive discussion of the theme. Its use and discussion will be restricted to its relevance to the thesis as a whole. In essence, my analysis of Lawrence's 'chivalric fantasy' will touch upon his rendition of narratives of male bonding within the Arab army, which is portrayed as a 'knightly fellowship'. This rendition, I argue, appears to be informed by Lawrence's interest in the literary traditions of medieval chivalric romances and their portrayal of particular concepts, such as 'codes of honour', 'destiny' and 'courtly love', among others. As we will see, the most prominent of such literary works that captured Lawrence's imagination are the legends of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Indeed, Lawrence had been reading and rereading Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* while fighting in the desert. Consequently, my textual analysis will tackle the impact of such ideals on Lawrence's depiction and

as a comparative tool; his findings were based on an original formula of manipulating ‘text’ and ‘experience’ in an existing discourse of Orientalism. His use of intercultural textual scholarship (translating and critiquing Arabic texts), combined with his unparalleled first-hand experience (travels, sojourns and Hajj), contributed to the ‘authority’ of his intellectual arguments.

Nevertheless, Burton’s overall scholarship remains comparative in that it largely depended on an observational, camera-like approach in which the observer would detachedly ‘record’ the observed – the Arab Orient – without trying to alter it. In contrast, Lawrence’s “magnificent royal” appearance, which “marked” him “every inch king or caliph”, would set one of the major differences between Burton’s and Lawrence’s uses of masquerade in Orientalist discourse. Not only would Lawrence’s Arab attire enable him to “step out of the pages of ‘The Arabian Nights’”, but it would also help him become a truly engaged Arabian knight in one of the most dramatic episodes in the history of the region, the Arab Revolt. As we will see, the Revolt itself would become the manifestation of a short-lived modern marriage between European imperialism and anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism. In this light, Burton’s observation on the “spirit” of the Western “eccentric” appears to strike a prophetic resonance with Lawrence, who *truly* managed to not only “say” but also “do whatever the spirit directs”.

In this chapter, I am going to continue from where I left off in the previous one and dwell on T. E. Lawrence’s use of Orientalism. Like Burton, Lawrence’s Orientalist trajectory can be traced through a formula of ‘text’ and ‘experience’. I am going to shed light on young Lawrence’s fascination with medieval chivalry, his epistemological sojourn in Syria (whose purpose was to write his Oxford thesis on the Crusaders’ citadels) and the course of events that led to his epic involvement in the Arab Revolt. Burton’s and Lawrence’s ‘imperial masquerades’ and their use of the Arab East as a space of expression and the different roles they assign to it and play within it will be discussed. Burton’s and Lawrence’s Orientalisms will thus be juxtaposed against the backdrop of Empire and the changing politics on the eve of the Great War, which saw the modern(ist) marriage and (later) divorce of European imperialism and Arab nationalism.

While drawing on certain tropes in this saga, I shall also highlight the paradoxical discrepancy between Lawrence’s motives and those of Arab nationalists. When Lawrence was fleeing modernity and enacting a chivalric fantasy (by taking part in restoring the Arabs’

interpretation of literary chivalry in his masterpiece, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, which is admittedly his “personal narrative” of the Arab movement and his role in it.

'glorious past'), Arab nationalists were increasingly distancing themselves from what they regarded as their 'degenerate' Ottoman present and looking forward to embracing modernity on European terms. Finally, the extent to which Lawrence succeeds in enacting his vision will be analysed in light of his role and motive in co-leading, winning and inevitably destroying the political dream of Arab nationalism.¹⁶⁷ Lawrence's accounts on Arab sexuality will then be juxtaposed with the Arabs' modern construction of literary sexual morality in the wake of anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism in the next chapter.

The Arab East and Orientalist wish-fulfilment

Young Lawrence's literary and historical obsessions as well as his behavioural tendencies as a child appear to have been essential to his engagement in the Arab Orient and his subsequent role in the Arab Revolt. His interest in antiquarianism is evident from his early childhood; he was particularly fond of the medieval period and its chivalric literature and culture. By the time he was an undergraduate at Oxford, the "depth of his knowledge" about the Middle Ages was outstanding, so much so that his fellow undergraduates were "all taken" by it (James 1996, p.34). This was complemented by an ardent fascination with "the imaginative literature of early and high medieval France" (p.34), which Lawrence spent most of his time reading after leaving Oxford. He was particularly drawn to "thirteenth-century Provençal *trouvères* [...] and contemporary French *gestes*", which featured the "adventures of legendary and semi-legendary paladins"; this, James points out, was "a natural fusion of his childhood enthusiasm for Tennyson's Arthurian verse and his later interest in the feudal world" (p.38).¹⁶⁸ As James contends, "Prolonged exposure to medieval romances inevitably had a profound effect on [Lawrence's] thoughts and behaviour" (p.39).¹⁶⁹ However, the roots of Lawrence's obsession with medieval culture and his intellectual engagement in its pursuit

¹⁶⁷ I am referring to the secret Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) between the British and the French, which was implemented upon defeating the Ottomans and driving the Turks away from the Levant at the end of the First World War. The Agreement divided Greater Syria and Mesopotamia between the British and French. The French claimed what is now Syria and Lebanon, whereas the British took over Transjordan and Iraq. Under Russian insistence, Palestine was to remain "internationally administered". The Agreement was seen as an act of 'treachery' by the Arabs. See Barr (2007, pp.45-48) for more details. As we will see, Lawrence evidently opposed the Agreement and tried to overrule it.

¹⁶⁸ Alfred, Lord Tennyson published his cycle of narrative poems, *Idylls of the King*, between 1859-1885. The text retells the story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table.

¹⁶⁹ James highlights some interesting connections between certain romances and Lawrence's apparent identification with their heroes; see James (pp.38-40). James argues that Lawrence's awareness of his illegitimacy heightened his sense of identification with the equally illegitimate – yet noble – knights of the medieval literature (pp.39-40). One notable example is Sir Galahad, the illegitimate son of Elaine and Lancelot in the *Morte Darthur* (pp.39-40). James argues that Lawrence was particularly attracted to the literary knights' "peculiar force of destiny" and their strong "impulses" to follow their "vision" (p.40). This theme will be further complicated and elaborated on in this chapter, as I highlight similarities between aspects of Lawrence's self-fashioning in the Arab campaign and those of certain fictional knights (from the Round Table). My argument will show how Lawrence's self-fashioning can be seen as a melange of knightly behaviour that is somehow modelled on the conduct of more than one fictional character.

can be traced further back to his boyhood. From mastering brass-rubbing and having his work (the rubbings) beautifully displayed on his wall¹⁷⁰ to touring parts of England and France in search of traces of medieval antiquarian objects and castles,¹⁷¹ Lawrence's passionate interest turned into a zealous study, which, in the words of Lawrence James, "fused the romantic with the intellectual" (p.25).

A more specialised archaeological interest in the Crusaders' citadels was growing during Lawrence's undergraduate years at Oxford; his previous knowledge and experience of the citadels he had seen and examined on his excursions in England, Wales and France was smoothly guiding him towards the project of his final thesis, "An examination of the then little-known Crusader strongholds in the Lebanon, Syria and Palestine" (p.32). By 1907, following his visits to medieval castles in France and Wales, Lawrence had developed an architectural curiosity about the Crusaders' castles in Syria. He wanted to "find out whether the castles built by the Crusaders had followed the models of Western Europe or those of Byzantine military architecture" (Garnett 1951, pp.14-5).¹⁷² Hence Lawrence's historically inspired first encounter with the Arab East.

Paradoxically, however, the Levant of the early twentieth century stood in sharp contrast to Lawrence's medieval Orient, in which the ancient certainties (i.e. the tensions) of power relations between Christendom and Islam – the 'old conventions' – were being shattered by the emergent regrouping of imperial alliances; that is, the new (modernist) order of power coalition in the region on the eve of the Great War. The last Caliphate – the Ottoman Empire – was joining forces with the (Christian) Triple Alliance against the (Christian) Allies,¹⁷³ amidst the increasing political discontent of its (the Ottoman Empire's) Arab subjects. The Arabs' growing nationalist sentiment was deepening the fissure between the centuries-old religiously-arranged political marriage of the Turks and the Arabs, and, thus, further

¹⁷⁰ Lawrence became an accomplished brass-rubber in 1905 (James 1996, p.224).

¹⁷¹ See James (1996, pp.24-29) for more details on Lawrence's archaeological interest in medieval culture.

¹⁷² Of course, Lawrence's finding was that the "all that was good in Crusading architecture hailed from France and Italy" (cited in Barr, p.56). As Barr points out, Lawrence's discovery, which earned him his first-class degree, "overturned the prevailing assumption that Crusade castles had borrowed stylistically from the Byzantine East" (p.56). More importantly, however, it gave him an insight into the "medieval roots of the French belief that Syria was theirs. France's determination to return to Syria was an ambition Lawrence was determined to ruin" (p.56).

¹⁷³ The Ottoman Empire's nineteenth-century alliance with the British Empire was being gradually eroded and replaced by a new alliance with the Germans; see Barr (pp.8-10). Needless to say, the symbolic significance of the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph and his influence on all Muslims (including Britain's subjects) were what attracted the Germans to pursuing this new strategic partnership (Barr, p.10). On his historic visit to Damascus in 1898, the Kaiser declared, "The Sultan and the three hundred million Muslims who revere him as their leader should know that the German Emperor is their friend forever" (cited in Barr, p.10). Interestingly, the Kaiser "gave the city an overblown gilt wreath to bolt on to the tomb of Saladin, the Muslim warrior lionised for defeating the Crusaders seven centuries before" (Barr, p.10). As we will see later in this chapter, the gilt ornament plays a further symbolic role when Lawrence and the Arabs reach Damascus in 1918.

demarcating the dichotomy between the religious and the nationalist in the last days of the last Muslim Empire.¹⁷⁴

In short, this Levantine-Arab Orient was rapidly becoming very different from Burton's Victorian more conventional Orient. Nonetheless, the political reality of the contemporary Orient did not seem relevant to Lawrence's academic pursuit,¹⁷⁵ or so he believed. At any rate, Lawrence had the support of Dr David Hogarth, the British archaeologist, who recognised his archaeological gift and the pressing need for such an expedition at the time.¹⁷⁶ Hogarth was also aware of the advantages of combining Lawrence's natural appetite for (and scholarly knowledge of) the medieval past with a direct 'experience' in the Middle East, "whose ancient monuments", Hogarth believed, "conspicuously exalt the past at the expense of the present" (cited in James 1996, p.31). Yet, hardly would Hogarth have predicted the consequences of introducing Lawrence to the Arab Orient. Despite realising that Lawrence "was more at home in the past than the present" (cited in James 1996, p.31), neither Hogarth nor the entire Colonial Office had anticipated the crucial impact he would have on the changing politics in the region. For it was in the Orient that Lawrence metamorphoses from (passive) scholar to (active) soldier. With this metamorphosis, however, his chivalric interests and fantasies appear to have undergone an evolution of their own.

For Lawrence, the Arab East proved to be the platform upon which he had been able to enact his literary-fuelled, chivalric fantasy. As we will see, his fantasy would transcend the scholar's realm of the *textual* (the literary, historical and fantastical) to be fulfilled in the soldier's realm of the *experiential* (during his physical involvement in the Arab Revolt). Moreover, he would somehow manage to retrieve a sense of the medieval chivalric past where his fantasy belongs. By becoming an Arabian knight and running the war in the East on

¹⁷⁴ While aspects of anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, it is important to draw attention to the crucial role the symbolism of Islam played for the conflicting European Powers. While the German Kaiser befriended the Ottomans to stress the Sultan's role as Caliph for all Muslims, the British pointed out that the Turkish Caliph did not meet the ancient tenet of the Caliphate for not being an Arab – let alone being a descendant from the Prophet or even from Quraysh, the Prophet's tribe (Barr, p.11). Hence their strategic decision to support Sharif Hussein of Mecca, who claimed lineage from the Prophet.

¹⁷⁵ For "Lawrence's quest in the Lebanon and Syria in 1909 was for evidence of the region's past, not its present or future" (James, p.47).

¹⁷⁶ Hogarth had also entrusted Lawrence with a further task; he wanted to him to investigate the ancient site of the Hittite city of Karkamis on the Turkish-Syrian border (James, p.44). German archaeologists had capitalised on the growing relations between their country and the Ottoman Empire and began digging for their research on the Hittite civilisation (p.44). Although Lawrence's assignment was essentially epistemological, "there was an underlying element of rivalry with the Germans. Filling state museums with objects recovered from remote lands was a prestigious form of cultural imperialism" (p.44).

horseback/camelback away from modernity's (un-chivalric) killing machine,¹⁷⁷ Lawrence's fantasy appears to have truly materialised.

Lawrence's relationship with the Orient may appear romantic; yet it is complex for it is entangled with a plethora of unconventional power relations. We ought to question the paradigm of empowerment in which Lawrence and the Orient (as well as the Arabs) were operating. Did Lawrence empower the Arab Orient by taking part in 'liberating' it from the Ottoman-Turks? Or did the Arab Orient, with its well-established image in Orientalist discourse, empower Lawrence and enable him to enact his chivalric dream? As we have seen, not unlike Lawrence, Burton's interaction with the East (his Orientalism) involved 'text' and 'experience'. Fictional texts, despite their dissimilar use, seem to characterise Burton's and Lawrence's approaches to the Arab East. Yet Lawrence's intimate relationship with chivalric books extends back long before his involvement in the Arab Revolt. In a letter addressed to his mother in August 1910, Lawrence tells her of his delight at finding a better copy of *Petit de Saintré*, a 15th-century "novel of knightly manners"; he writes:

You know, I think, the joy of getting into a strange country in a book: at home when I have shut my door and the town is in bed – and I know that nothing, not even the dawn – can disturb me in my curtains: only the slow crumbling of the coals in the fire: they get so red and throw such splendid glimmerings on the Hypons and the brasswork. And it is lovely too, after you have been wandering for hours in the forest with Percivale or Sagramors le desirous,¹⁷⁸ to open the door, and from over the Cherwell to look at the sun glowering through the valley-mists. Why does one not like things if there are other people about? Why cannot one make one's books live except in the night, after hours of straining? and you know they have to be your own books too, and you have to read them more than once. I think they take in something of your personality, and your environment also – you know a second hand book sometimes is so much more flesh and blood than a new one – and it is almost terrible to think that your ideas, yourself in your books, may be giving life to generations of readers after you are forgotten. It is that specially which makes one need good books: books that will be worthy of what you are going to put into them. What would you think of a great sculptor who flung away his gifts on modelling clay or sand? Imagination should be put into the most precious caskets, and that is why one can only live in the future or the past, in Utopia or the Wood beyond the World. Father won't know all this – but if you can get the right book at the right time you taste joys – not only bodily, physical, but spiritual also, which pass one out above and beyond one's miserable self, as it were through a huge air, following the light of another man's thought. And you can never be quite the old self again. You have forgotten a little bit: or rather pushed it out

¹⁷⁷ Of course, Lawrence used dynamite and relied on the Allies' arsenal to arm the Arabs in the desert. However, the use of such modern warfare equipment on the Eastern Front was minimal compared with its use on the Western Front. As Dawson (1994) points out, when cavalry "had been abandoned on the Western Front in 1915", it played a central part in the war in the Middle East (p.174). Dawny, one of the British officers, who had witnessed the horrors of the Western Front, objected to the introduction of such "'western frightfulness into our very gentlemanly little war'" (cited in Barr 2007, p.256).

¹⁷⁸ Sir Sagramore of Hungary is a Knight of the Round Table in the Arthurian Legend.

with a little of the inspiration of what is immortal in someone who has gone before you. (cited in Garnett 1951, pp.38-39)

It is interesting to have an early insight of what Lawrence had thought of the “joys of getting into a strange country in a book” before acting upon his fantasy and turning the whole experience – the Arab Revolt – into one of the most “joyful” of books – *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*. Needless to say, the letter is replete with prophetic paradox. Very significant, however, is Lawrence’s view on the impossibility of living in the present and the imagination’s role in allowing one to “live in the future or the past”. For this is precisely what he seems to have done when he embodied the image (and persona) of the “mysterious Blond Bedouin”.

Thus, not only has the Arab Orient (as a platform) helped Lawrence transcend the pages of his books and *physically* experience his chivalric fantasy, but it has also enabled him to enact it *in the past*, where it belongs. As we have seen, the concept of the ‘Unchanging East’ is key to the Orientalised image of the Orient. Upon his first encounter with T. E. Lawrence, Lowell Thomas describes Christian Street in Jerusalem, where the encounter had allegedly taken place; he writes,

Christian Street is one of the most picturesque and kaleidoscopic thoroughfares in the Near East. Russian Jews, with their corkscrew curls, Greek priests in tall black hats and flowing robes, fierce desert nomads in goatskin coats reminiscent of the days of Abraham, Turks in balloon-like trousers, Arab merchants lending a brilliant note with their gay Turbans and gowns, all rub elbows in that narrow lane bazaars, shops and coffee-houses that lead to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. (1962, p.19)

In the middle of this colourfully depicted street, whose description could easily place it timelessly in any historical era,¹⁷⁹ Thomas spots Lawrence, who “seemed wrapped in some inner contemplation” (p.20). Thomas’s “first thought as [he] glanced at [Lawrence’s] face was that he might be one of the younger apostles returned to life. His expression”, Thomas continues, “was serene, almost saintly, in its selflessness and repose” (p.20). No doubt, Thomas’s romanticised narration of the alleged encounter serves as an enhanced Orientalist dramatization of the figure of ‘Lawrence of Arabia’, whom he created.¹⁸⁰ Nonetheless,

¹⁷⁹ Dawson (1994) observes that the “colourful costumes function here as signs of the exotic richness of teeming Eastern life, timeless and unchanging since Biblical times [...]” (p.169). As we have seen with Burton, Orientalists’ depiction of the East’s timelessness proves very enabling indeed. This will be further explored in this chapter.

¹⁸⁰ Lowell Thomas was the American journalist who first publicised the image of ‘Lawrence of Arabia’. He brought his New York ‘travelogue’, ‘With Allenby in Palestine’, to London in 1919 after having met General Allenby and Lawrence in Jerusalem in 1918 (Dawson 1994, p.167). Thomas put on a multi-media show in London and introduced Lawrence to the public using film slide material and narrative commentary; he showed Lawrence in Arab dress (pp.167-68). The show, which featured in the Royal Opera House and the Royal Albert Hall among other major venues in London, proved very popular, so much so that over a million spectators were said to have seen it by November 1919 (p.168). Lawrence publicly distanced himself from it and refused to give it a personal endorsement, although some argue that it may have half-appealed to him for “Lawrence quietly attended the show several times” (p.193). See Part III in Dawson (1994) for a detailed analysis of Thomas’s book.

Thomas's narrative also sheds light on Orientalism's construction of the 'timelessness' of the Arab East and its potential for 'temporal displacement'. In Lawrence's case, the Orient itself plays a central role in adding a sense of much needed antiquity into the setting in which he is performing his (self-allocated) role.¹⁸¹ If aspects of early twentieth-century Jerusalem were still "reminiscent of the days of Abraham", the Arabian desert with its seemingly infinite landscape would be eternity itself.

Whilst still on his archaeological expedition in North Syria,¹⁸² Lawrence expresses a longing for the desert 'proper' – before he 'plunges' into it as he does later in Arabia. Upon stumbling across the Roman ruins of what the local Arabs believed to be a "desert-palace" built by "a prince of the border" for "his queen", Lawrence seems to succumb to the seduction of the Arabian desert, whose long-travelled wind – its "breath" – proves sweeter, purer and far more supreme than the "greater richness"; that is, "the precious essential oils of flowers" with which the ancient clay of this "desert-place" was kneaded. Reflecting on the incident in the *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence writes,

My guides, sniffing the air like dogs, led me from crumbling room to room, saying, 'This is jessamine, this violet, this rose'. But at last Dahoum drew me: 'Come and smell the very sweetest of all', and we went to the main lodging, to the gaping window sockets of its eastern face, and there drank with open mouths of the effortless, empty, eddyless wind of the desert, throbbing past. That slow breath had been born somewhere beyond the distant Euphrates and had dragged its way across many days and nights of dead grass, to its first obstacle, the man-made walls of our broken palace. About them it seemed to fret and linger, murmuring in baby-speech. 'This, they told me, 'is the best: it has no taste.' My Arabs were turning their backs on perfumes and luxuries to choose the things in which mankind had had no share or part. (1979, pp.17-18)

While the Arab Orient functioned as a torch of epistemological enlightenment (sexual and otherwise) for Burton, who tried to *bring it home* to his contemporary Victorian intellectual milieu, Lawrence's attraction to the desert appears to have been more of an enchanted form of escapism towards (the concept of) the 'Unchanging East'. While Burton was trying to bring an element of the Orient – its 'timeless' sexual otherness – home in order to inflict change on his Victorian present, Lawrence was escaping the rapidly changing politics of modernity (his

¹⁸¹ As we will see, much of Lawrence's conduct in the Arab East before and during the Revolt is very much informed by a self-allocation of roles. During his pre-war time in Syria, Lawrence appointed himself as British Consul at Karkamis to settle tribal disputes (James, p.64). His role in the Arab Revolt, too, was very much self-allocated. These roles will be further examined towards the end of the chapter.

¹⁸² As indicated earlier, Lawrence spent time at the archaeological site of Karkamis where he also met Selim Ahmad, or Dahoum, the Syrian 'donkey-boy' and site labourer, of whom Lawrence became very fond. Dahoum would later become Lawrence's servant (pp.67-71). Aspects of Lawrence's relationship with Dahoum will be explored later in the chapter.

present) by going East to the Arabian desert whose seemingly uniform-looking landscape symbolises the epitome of ‘un-change’.

As we will see, Lawrence’s quest for the ‘unchanging’ past in the Near East would, quite ironically, result in one of the most dramatic changes in the history of the region. However, I would like to continue with the current line of argument before I embark on analysing the consequences of Lawrence’s interventionist interaction with the Arab East. Returning to the image of the “desert-palace”, I would like to show how it marks a point of departure between Burton’s and Lawrence’s uses of Orientalism. While the palace seems to represent an Orientalist threshold for Eastern emancipation for Lawrence – a catalyst for *going East* and integrating with (and in) it –, it also invokes an image from *The Arabian Nights*. In fact, Lawrence himself, who enjoyed his archaeological “exile” at “Carcemish [Karkamis]” in North Syria, had described the site as “a wonderful place and time: as golden as Haroun el Raschid’s in Tennyson” (cited in James, p.54). Thus, it is significant that his literary reproduction of its memory in *Seven Pillars* would still conjure up a seemingly *Nights*-inspired image.

The significance of the “desert-palace” image also lies in its symbolic connection to Burton’s Orientalism. If we accept that the “palace” is reminiscent of *The Arabian Nights*, whereby Oriental tales are narrated only to be appropriated and *imported* by Burton (for western consumption *at home*), the same palace seems to seduce Lawrence to *travel* further East instead. By going East, Lawrence would eventually take part in *altering* the political and historical scene of the Arab Orient, as we will see later in this chapter. Therefore, the image of “desert-palace”, as a metaphorical transitional threshold, sets a difference between Burton’s and Lawrence’s Orientalisms. While Burton’s approach is epistemologically comparative, Lawrence’s is escapist (yet integrative).¹⁸³

For both Orientalists, however, the empowerment of the Orient lies in the flexibility of manipulating its temporal and spatial significances as well as the different modes of interaction possible with (and within) it.¹⁸⁴ As a platform of sorts, the perceived ‘timelessness’ of the ‘Unchanging East’ renders it appropriate for projecting present and past wishes and desires in Orientalist discourse. As we have seen, Burton’s Orient functions as an amphitheatre for displaying, comparing and discussing ‘Other’ forms of sexuality that are, he argues,

¹⁸³ Lawrence’s ‘integration’ with the East will be explained later in this chapter.

¹⁸⁴ Interestingly, it seems that Burton’s and Lawrence’s interests in the Arab East share a medieval root that appears to disregard the contemporary reality of the Arab world. As we have seen, Burton had largely ignored the cultural and literary changes that had been taking place in Arabic literature when he translated *The Arabian Nights* and presented it as a valuable tool for Eastern knowledge. As we will see, Lawrence too appears to have been oblivious to some of the by-products of the cultural change that had been sweeping over the Arab East.

available and possible in the neighbouring Near East in *the now*. Yet, Burton's interaction with the Orient remains largely passive as Burton's Orient is a textual screen onto which he projects and presents his discussions of alternative sexuality for his audiences at home. Put simply, Burton's Orient remains an *illustrative tool* – a 'handy' point of reference – for his home-orientated scholarship on sexuality.

In contrast, Lawrence's attraction to the Orient begins in the past (as a scholar interested in its archaeology), while his active interaction with it (as a soldier) leads to (and ends in) the future – an Ottoman-free Near East, with a new set of geopolitics very different to those existent when he first set foot in it. Nevertheless, for both Orientalists, the Orient remains by and large the ultimate platform for wish-fulfilment in the Freudian sense. To that effect, I would like to embark on a brief psychoanalytic examination of Burton's and Lawrence's Orientalisms and point out the functional similarity between the Arab Orient and dreams.

If we accept that the Arab Orient has been a platform for fulfilling Orientalist wishes, its function can then be said to resemble that of dreams in the Freudian sense.¹⁸⁵ In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900-1901), Freud famously contends that dreams serve as psychical fulfilment for (often infantile) wishes that cannot be realised in the 'material' world.¹⁸⁶ Bearing Freud's theory in mind, I would like to draw on Lawrence's rather escapist relationship with text (fictional, legendary books) and his fascination with the chivalric past (as highlighted in his letter above) on the one hand, and the dream-like role of the Arab East in fulfilling his wishes/fantasies experientially. The role of the Arab Orient in fulfilling Burton's (different) wishes will then be compared and contrasted against the backdrop of a metaphorical analogy of Freudian concepts in relation to both Orientalists' manipulation of 'text' and 'experience'.

¹⁸⁵ This is true while taking into consideration the varying natures of these 'wishes' and the dissimilar manifestation of their fulfilment. Freudian theory in this brief analysis is used as an analogy to help highlight the 'dream-like' role of the Arab Orient in Orientalist discourse. The main emphasis, however, is on the Orient itself as a *platform*; that is, a geographical space with special enabling powers, perpetuated by Orientalist discourse. Temporality, which also features in Freud's theory on dreams, plays an important role in this analysis as it highlights Burton's anachronistic approach to the literatures of the Arab East on the one hand and Lawrence's fluid rendition of the ancient and the modern in the Arab Revolt, on the other. These notions will be further explored and duly unpacked in the course of this chapter and the next.

¹⁸⁶ Freud distinguishes between two types of 'reality': "psychical reality", which belongs to the realm of the unconscious and governs the unconscious aspects of our life, including dreams, and "material reality", which belongs to the realm of consciousness and is governed by the external world and our (regulated) conscious ways of interacting with it. In Freud's words the distinction between psychical and material realities can be summed up as follows, "If we look at unconscious wishes reduced to their most fundamental and truest shape, we shall have to conclude, no doubt, that psychical reality is a particular form of existence not to be confused with material reality" (2001, p.782).

To begin with, the two distinct assemblages I would like to propose revolve around invoking a metaphorical correspondence between the realm of the 'fictional-textual' and 'dreaming-life' (because of their existential relationship within "psychical reality") on the one hand, and the realm of the 'experiential' and 'waking-life' (because of their functional/operational relationship within "material reality"), on the other. By applying this analogy to Lawrence's letter above, we can perhaps see how Lawrence's obsession with reading and re-reading his fictional books serves as a psychical outlet for fulfilling fantasies and desires unobtainable in the 'real' world, hence Lawrence's "joy of getting into a strange country in a book" *at night*. By strictly emphasising the importance of reading at night, Lawrence appears to be somehow linking the act of reading to that of dreaming.

In addition, Lawrence draws attention to the similarity between the prerequisites of both 'modes of psychical wish-fulfilment' (i.e. dreaming and reading); that is, the solitary, private nature of both acts. He writes, "Why does one not like things if there are other people about? Why cannot one make one's books live except in the night, after hours of straining?" Crucially, however, the difference between the act of reading and that of dreaming lies in the realm of their execution. While reading may enact a fantasy by picturing it in waking-life, a dream pictures and fulfils a wish in dreaming-life. Despite the similarity in their psychical functionality, both acts are executed in two different realms.

In *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence appears to draw on this distinction. Remarkably, however, he also draws on the potential of not only alternating between waking and dreaming lives while fulfilling wishes psychically, but also transcending the psychical into the material when fulfilling a wish/fantasy; i.e. enacting it *physically*. He writes,

All men dream: but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake in the day to find that it was vanity: but the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they may act their dream with open eyes, to make it possible. This I did. I meant to make a new nation, to restore a lost influence, to give twenty millions of Semites the foundations on which to build an inspired dream-palace of their national thoughts. (1979, p.4)

Lawrence appears to be transcending the realm of the psychical (the fantastical and the literary) and moving towards that of the material (the experiential and the military) by "acting [his] dream with open eyes". In other words, Lawrence is *conflating* the two realms. What allows this transcendence/conflation is the perception of the Arab Orient's 'timelessness' in Orientalist discourse.¹⁸⁷ In Lawrence's case, this perception appears to have somehow

¹⁸⁷ As we have seen, Burton's Orientalism also conflated 'text' and 'experience' and drew on a timeless (unchanging) concept of the Arab East's sexual morality. In a sense, Lawrence's conflation of the two realms can be seen in the

coincided with his infantile chivalric fantasies and created the perfect platform for their transcendence (from the realm of the psychical to that of the material).

For Lawrence's heroic fantasies can be traced to his very early childhood, as evident in the recollections of his elder brother, Bob, who remembers:

When we were small and shared a large bedroom, he used to tell a story which went on night after night without any end. It was a story of adventure and the successful defiance of a tower against numerous foes, and the chief characters were Fizzy-Fuzz, Pompey, and Pete – fur animal dolls that my brothers had. Long pieces of rhyme telling of his exploits and achievements were composed by him, and this was before he was nine. (cited in Garnett 1951, p.11)

Bob's recollection exposes an interesting angle to the infantile origin of Lawrence's chivalric desire. Lawrence's apparent 'compulsion' to narrate and 'repeat' the 'game' every night can also be cast in Freudian light. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud argues that children's compulsion to repetition "in their play" can be linked to their desire to "make themselves masters of [a] situation" (2012, Loc. 169). He continues, "[...] it is clear enough that all their play is influenced by the dominant wish of their time of life: viz. to be grown-up and to be able to do what grown-up people do" (Loc.169). In this light, it is not perhaps too far-fetched to link such infantile impulses on young Lawrence's part to his chivalric fantasy, which, as an adult, he was indeed able to "master" on the stage of the Arab Orient. Relevant to this is what James tells us about Lawrence's identification with many of the literary chivalric heroes (1996, p.39) he had read about as a child as well as his pride at privately discovering his noble ancestry¹⁸⁸, which, he – in typical medieval fashion – believed, would endow him with inherited moral virtue, passed on to him with the nobility of his blood (1996, p.7-8).¹⁸⁹

shadow of Burton's Orientalism, which, as has been argued in the previous chapter, appears to prove the limitless potential of the Orient as a space of possibilities. Indeed, both Orientalists were engaged in an act of transcendence from the fictional to the experiential, albeit in their own distinctive ways. While Burton conflated the literary and the anthropological in his rendition of the Arab East and its sexual morality, Lawrence's interaction with the Arab East involved a complex act of transcendence from the psychical into the material by means of conflating the two in order to enact a literary-fuelled fantasy and fulfil it in 'material reality' – i.e. on the platform of the (anti-mimetic) Arab Orient.

¹⁸⁸ As indicated earlier, Lawrence and his brothers were the illegitimate children of Thomas Robert Chapman, an Irish gentleman, who left his wife and eloped with Lawrence's Scottish mother, Sarah Junner, who arrived at the Chapman estate in Westmeath to work as a nanny (James, pp3-5).

¹⁸⁹ James observes the special boost of self-esteem Lawrence has had "by knowing that in the legendary medieval past his own birth [i.e. being an illegitimate child] carried no moral stigma nor hindered advancement" (1996, p.39). As James (pp.38-40) argues, Lawrence appears to have identified with many literary knights, with whom he appeared to share a "peculiar force of destiny" (p.40). Lawrence's illegitimate birth would align him with Galahad, the illegitimate son of Lancelot and Elaine in the Arthurian legends. Yet Lawrence's identification with heroic characters from medieval chivalric romances seems to be fluid in that it takes many forms and can be associated with a multiplicity of characters. As we will see, the way in which Lawrence choreographs his role in his own epic – a self-allocated co-leader of the Arab campaign in *Seven Pillars* – appears to be a collective synthesis of the conduct of the various heroes, with whom he had been fascinated since his childhood. References to these embodiments will be made in footnotes throughout the thesis.

This also echoes Freud's emphasis on the importance of infantile wishes and impulses in the dream-work; Freud writes, "*we find the child and the child's impulses still living on in the dream*" (2001, p.191). Yet, towards the end of his book, Freud wonders about the strength of such mental impulses and their potential ability to perhaps transcend the realm of the psychical to that of the material; he writes, "Have not the unconscious impulses brought out by dreams the importance of real forces in mental life? Is the ethical significance of suppressed wishes to be made light of – wishes which, just as they lead to dreams, may some day lead to other things?" (2001, pp.619-20) The ethicality of Lawrence's wish (to become an Arabian knight and 'liberate' the Arabs and its ensuing not-so-honourable consequences which left the Levant under European control) may be subject to debate. However, what is perhaps less debatable is the role of the Arab Orient in making this wish/fantasy come true.

One of Lawrence's "favourite romances", the early thirteenth-century French epic poem, *Huon de Bordeaux* (James, p.39), acquires an interesting significance when considered in light of Freud's rhetorical question above. In this tale, Huon, accompanied by "his knightly band", embarks on a challenging adventure in Arabia whereby he and his knights suffer from fatigue, thirst and hunger and show a legendary, superhuman power of endurance before defeating the "Emir of Babylon and his paynims". Huon is aided by Auberon, a friendly magician prince, who also hosts him in his "enchanted kingdom on the shores of the Red Sea" and grants him a magical horn that "can summon supernatural assistance" when need be (James 1996, p.40). Freud would probably have much to say about the relevance of this fantastical tale to Lawrence's eventual involvement in the Arab Revolt, when the latter was simply "acting [his] dream [or textual fantasy] with open eyes". After all, dreams and fantasies (textual or otherwise) belong to the realm of the 'psychical', and as Freud rather half-mockingly speculated, "may some day lead to other things". Crucially, however, there needs to be a special situational platform for this transcendence – from the psychical to the material – to take place. In Lawrence's case, it had been the Arab Orient on the eve of modernity.

Moreover, Freud's speculative epilogue to his book, in which he further complicates the relationship between dreams (as a platform for wish-fulfilment) and temporality, appears to chime with Lawrence's relationship with imagination (textual fantasy) and his compulsive urge to flee the present. As Lawrence declares in his letter, "Imagination should be put into the most precious caskets, and that is why one can only live in the future or the past, in Utopia or the Wood beyond the World." Lawrence's statement gains further significance when juxtaposed with Freud's philosophically-intriguing conjecture, with which he concludes his book on dreams:

And the value of dreams for giving us knowledge of the future? There is of course no question of that. [Cf. p. 5 *n.*] It would be truer to say instead that they give us knowledge of the past. For dreams are derived from the past in every sense. Nevertheless the ancient belief that dreams foretell the future is not wholly devoid of truth. By picturing our wishes as fulfilled, dreams are after all leading to the future. But this future, which the dreamer pictures as the present, has been moulded by his indestructible wish into a perfect likeness of the past. (2001, p.621)

Lawrence, as a case-study, emerges as a remarkable demonstration of Freudian thought on dreams, fantasy, wish-fulfilment and temporality.

Nonetheless, Lawrence's ability to *enact* his dream/fantasy experientially in the Orient may have even surpassed Freud's own speculations. For although Freud seems to envisage a form of existence where one may predominantly live in one's own private world (i.e. psychical reality), he rules out any chance of social (let alone political) success for such an attempt. In *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), Freud argues, "He [who chooses to escape to his inner world] becomes a madman, who for the most part finds no one to help him in carrying through his delusion" (1963, p.18). Surely, this does not quite apply to Lawrence. For not only did Lawrence enact his "delusion", but he also managed to transfer it and somehow superimpose it on a whole army that marched with him 'on the road to Damascus' in order to reclaim a common 'vision'. Nevertheless, Lawrence's recalibration of temporality seems to adhere to Freud's conjecture above. As indicated earlier, the temporal basis of Lawrence's fantastical relationship with the East started off with an epistemological connection to its chivalric past – his study of the Crusaders' citadels in Syria – and ended up with a future that, in one sense, "has been moulded by [an] indestructible wish into a[(n)] [(im)]perfect likeness of the past".

To be sure, much of Lawrence's wish-fulfilment was aided and brought about by Empire and its rapid encroachment in the region. Yet, the region itself – the Orient – was behind the greater part of his success. For his dream/fantasy might probably not have materialised the way it did had it not been for his *pre-imperial* epistemological investment in Syrian medieval archaeology in the first place.¹⁹⁰ Likewise, Burton's use of the Arab East to fulfil his desire – to discuss sexuality comparatively – was very much achieved with minimum (or no direct) imperial intervention, as we have seen. Both Orientalists were free to draw on the 'timelessness' of the 'Unchanging East', albeit differently.

¹⁹⁰ As Barr points out, Lawrence's investigation of Crusaders' citadels in the Levant helped him "instinctively understand the medieval roots of the French belief that Syria was theirs. France's determination to return to Syria was an ambition Lawrence was determined to ruin" (p.56).

As we have seen, Burton's selection of Arabian texts was not particularly concerned with a specific period in Arab culture and literature as much as it was concerned with what he regarded as a '*timeless*' representation of sexuality. Indeed, Burton was oblivious to the contemporary dramatic changes in Arab constructions of literary sexual morality. After all, Burton's interaction with the Orient was not interventionist in that he did not aim at changing it. For Burton's main aim was to alter sexual attitudes at home. All the same, the Arab Orient, as a neighbouring geographical space of '*timeless*' sexual otherness, served as the perfect illustrative tool for Burton. In that respect, the Arab Orient fulfilled Burton's comparative objective.

Yet this goes further to illustrate the various roles the East can play to fulfil Orientalist wishes and desires. Despite the difference in both Orientalists' wishes/fantasies, the Arab Orient enabled them both to feel and experience a certain degree of connection with their respective psychical realities. If psychical reality "means nothing more than the reality of thoughts, of our personal world", to use Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontails's words, the Arab East has thus reassured our two Orientalists that "it is as valid as that of the material world" (1986, p.7), hence the uniformly dream-like role of the Arab Orient within Orientalist discourse.

Orientalist masquerade from Burton to Lawrence: another homoerotic connection

As we have seen, the Arab Orient can function as a platform for wish-fulfilment in Orientalist discourse. While Burton and Lawrence may have interacted with the Arab East differently, their Orientalist approach converges, once again, in their homoerotically-inclined use of masquerade. In what follows, I am going to draw on Lawrence's use of masquerade and compare it with Burton's. The aim is to highlight the homoerotic underpinnings of Lawrence's chivalric fantasy and its enactment. To begin with, if we return to the "desert-palace" passage above, we find that it is Dahoum, Lawrence's Syrian 'donkey-boy', who appears to guide Lawrence to the palace's "main lodging" and "the gaping window sockets of its eastern face", and, thus, metaphorically reveal the desert "breath" to him. James (1996) observes that Lawrence "was deeply grateful [for this revelation as it opened] his mind to the peerless solitude of the desert" (p.68). However, Dahoum's revelation can also be directly connected to Lawrence's eventual involvement in the Arab Revolt; that is, the enactment of his of his chivalric wish.

In James's words, "Dahoum was to Lawrence as a squire was to a knight" (p.68). Lawrence first met 14-year-old Dahoum in 1911 (Aldrich 2003, p.75) when the latter was

employed as a water boy at Karkamis (James, p.67). Dahoum, whose real name was Selim Ahmed,¹⁹¹ stood out from the other labourers as he could read and write (James, p.68). Lawrence admired him and took him as a houseboy first and then made him his servant (p.67). Dahoum accompanied him on a cruise along the Syrian coast (p.67). Lawrence also took him with him on holiday to England in the summer of 1913, where he met his mother and brother at Oxford (Aldrich, p.75). "Lawrence's friends were much taken by Dahoum's beauty, and one commissioned a portrait of him" (Aldrich, p.75). Dahoum also accompanied him on his expedition in the Sinai desert in 1914 (James, p.67). According to Aldrich, the pair grew "inseparable" (p.75).¹⁹² When at the digging site in Karkamis, Lawrence erected a naked statue of Dahoum on the roof of his house after he had convinced the boy to pose for him naked in an act that "scandalised" the locals (James, p.69).

The evident homoeroticism in this relationship would acquire further significance when linked with the nationalist cause of the Arab Revolt and Lawrence's role in it.¹⁹³ By Lawrence's own admission, his involvement in the Arab Revolt had an emotional basis. As James points out,

When, in 1919, George Kidston, a professional diplomat, asked Lawrence to explain why he had become so closely involved in the Arab national movement, he was given four reasons.¹⁹⁴ The first was personal, 'I liked a particular Arab very much, and I thought that freedom for the race would be an acceptable present'. (1996, p.70)

Lawrence's admission is confirmed in the first page of *Seven Pillars*, where he dedicates a beautifully written, poignant poem to "S[elim] A[hmed]" (i.e. Dahoum), who sadly dies before Lawrence reaches Damascus in 1918 (Aldrich, p.76). The poem, which has been described as "one of the most moving tributes to young love ever written" (Asher, cited in Aldrich, p.77), will be revisited at the end of this chapter. For the time being, however, I would like to draw on the homoerotic significance of the figure of Dahoum, and his symbolic role in reshaping and fuelling Lawrence's fantasy as well as introducing him to disguise.

The exact nature of Lawrence's relationship with Dahoum has been subject to much speculation; however, its homoeroticism is very difficult to deny. One of Lawrence's RAF companions, Robert Graves, claims that, by Lawrence's own admission, Dahoum was "the only

¹⁹¹ Selim Ahmed's nickname, Dahoum, means the 'dark one' in Arabic (Garnett, pp.14-15). The name was meant to be a joke since Selim was "light-skinned" (James, p.67).

¹⁹² Aldrich also shows how Dahoum and Lawrence nursed one another when they caught malaria and dysentery respectively (p.75).

¹⁹³ Critics have drawn on the homoerotic connotations of Lawrence's interaction with Dahoum. James attributes a Uranian aspect to this relationship (p.69); this theme will be revisited briefly in the next chapter.

¹⁹⁴ Lawrence's fourth reason, an "intellectual curiosity" for wanting to be "at the mainspring of a national movement" (cited in James, p.40), will be analysed later in this chapter.

person [...] with whom he [i.e. Lawrence] had ever been in love” (Aldrich 2003, pp.76-77). Now what this “love” precisely meant and entailed may never be known;¹⁹⁵ nonetheless, it seems to offer a connection to an Orientalist device that had also been employed by Burton. For it was through this relationship that Lawrence was first introduced to cross-dressing and disguise in Arab costume. As James notes, “Not only could Dahoum teach Lawrence, they could share in boyish amusements. They exchanged clothes and, for the first time, Lawrence began to dress in Arab costume” (1996, p.69). Lawrence’s first attempt at Oriental masquerade was thus homoerotically charged. See Figure 4 below:

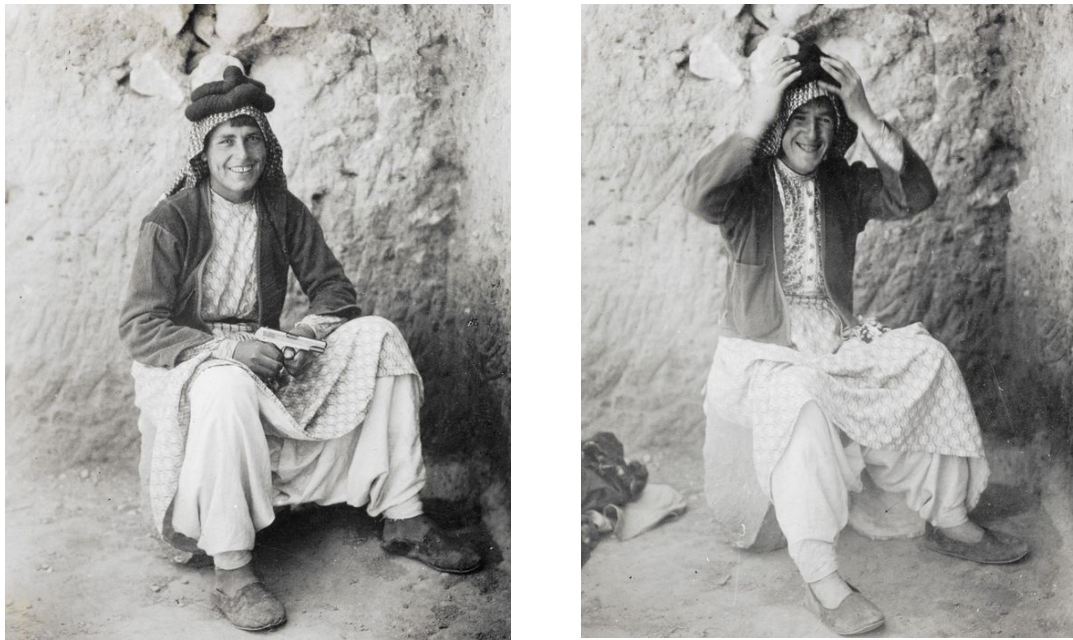


Figure 4: Dahoum and Lawrence exchanging attire. *Arab Water Boy* (left) is a photograph of Dahoum dressed in his local attire, holding Lawrence’s pistol. Lawrence features in the photograph on the right, dressed up in Dahoum’s attire. The original photographs are in the British Library, London.

As we have seen, Burton’s first endeavour at Oriental disguise in Karachi had also been notoriously homoerotic. Surely, the two experiences are far from identical, but they both share a homoerotic connection to the use of masquerade in the Orient. More importantly, Burton’s use of masquerade on this occasion was *imperially* inclined too. For it was (indirectly) commissioned by Sir Charles Napier, who “was disturbed by rumours that certain homosexual brothels in Karachi were corrupting his troops in Karachi” (Brodie 1971, pp.76-77). Although

¹⁹⁵ Although Robert Aldrich seems to suggest that the relationship may have been physical, basing his assumption on some vague notes in Lawrence’s diary. See Aldrich (2003, p.75).

Lawrence's first "boyish" attempt at Oriental masquerade (with Dahoum) was not particularly imperial in origin, it did come as a result of Hogarth's assignment to Lawrence. For we ought to remember that Lawrence's archaeological excavation at Karkamis was a side-assignment that was meant to ensure British contribution to the then popular and competitive research on the mysteries of the Hittite civilisation. As indicated above, the British were not willing to allow the Germans, with their growing links to the Ottoman Empire, to enjoy an epistemological monopoly over Middle Eastern archaeology. Yet the homoerotic-imperial underpinnings of Lawrence's Arab disguise become clearer when he adopts royal Sharifian Arab dress in his involvement in the Arab Revolt. After all, Lawrence was the only imperial agent who had chosen to replace his British khaki uniform with Arab dress in order to facilitate carrying out his mission, which, in itself, was a temporary hybrid coalition between imperial interests and those of Arabism.

However, to reduce Lawrence's decision to disguise as just a matter of functional convenience would be simplistic. The idea of dressing up as an Arab was simply out of the question for most British officers. Cyril Wilson, Britain's appointed 'Pilgrimage Officer' at Jeddah in 1916, "blanched at the attire which Husein insisted he wear while out of town" (Barr 2007, p.37). In a letter to Wingate,¹⁹⁶ he conceded: "The Sharif is sending me down a silk scarf and the Bedouin rope thing which I will wear over my helmet [...] [But] I absolutely refuse to disguise myself as an Arab [...] If I'm scuppered I propose to be scuppered in my own uniform" (cited in Barr 2007, p.37). Similarly, another British officer, Major Herbert Garland, found Arab dress to be more of a hindrance as Barr points out: "Garland hated the Arab clothing Lawrence recommended he wear to gain acceptance and to avoid standing out. It was 'most annoying and encumbering', he said, having found that the slightest breeze caused the ends of his headscarf to flick the cigarettes out of his mouth" (2007, p.102). In contrast, Lawrence was the only British officer to fully embrace it willingly. The image of 'Lawrence of Arabia' speaks for itself.

However, what it evokes is *not* an image of a well-camouflaged Arabian fighter. On the contrary, it is the image of a flamboyantly masqueraded English eccentric, who stands out in every way. Barr observes how Lawrence's special gold-embroidered white silk robes contributed to accentuating his difference; he writes, "Among the Bedu,¹⁹⁷ who dressed in russet, brown and indigo-dyed robes, these [gold-embroidered white silk robes] made

¹⁹⁶ Sir Reginald Wingate was appointed High Commissioner of Egypt in October 1916. Wingate insisted on sending troops to the Hejaz when the Arab Revolt seemed to subside (Barr, p.xvi).

¹⁹⁷ 'Bedu', is the Arabic plural for Bedouin; that is, Bedouins.

Lawrence anything but inconspicuous [...]” (2007, p.75). Thus, for Lawrence, Arabian masquerade seems to hold an alternative significance, beyond its practicality. As Barr puts it, Lawrence’s robes “[...] were designed to give Lawrence a status that would make his permanent presence in the camp unquestionable” (2007, p.75). After all, Lawrence’s masquerade complements and completes his metamorphosis into an Arabian knight,¹⁹⁸ which, as we will see, appears to bestow a sense of confidence upon him and help him manifest his understanding of Arabian tribal life.

“I want to rub off my British habits”, Lawrence tells a colleague (cited in Barr, p.102). This attitude cannot be further from his fellow British officers’, whose insistence on dealing with the Arabs and Bedu in strictly British ways was behind much of their failure. Barr notes how “Unlike Newcombe,¹⁹⁹ who – according to Wilson – arrived in the Hijaz with the impression he was to be the Arabs’ commander-in-chief, Lawrence always knew that he was an adviser, rather than a leader. And he knew that there was no way of changing the Bedu’s style of fighting” (2007, p.116). He goes on to cite further examples of British officers’ frustration at their inability to deal with the Bedu who “were remarkably intractable”:

Henry Hornby reported ‘a pretty strenuous and exasperating seven days’ to Newcombe,²⁰⁰ in which his Ageyli dynamiters had managed to waste most of their explosives: ‘How you stuck it for so long, beats me!’ Garland was more philosophical:²⁰¹ ‘I am not sure that the taking of Bedouin parties is a white man’s job. They always leave you in the lurch.’ Newcome moaned about his inability as an adviser to enforce any discipline: ‘A man has but to refuse to do a thing and he is petted and patted and given *bakhshish*. I am not allowed to punish anyone and cannot send a man back or take away his rifle. Everyone knows this; hence the trouble’. (2007, p.139)

Yet Lawrence faced none of these difficulties, and this is documented in the testimonies of his fellow and senior British officers, who admired his unique abilities and acknowledged his crucial role in winning the Arab campaign.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Effectively, the Sharifian dress articulates Lawrence’s status as a *faris-sheikh*, a knight-leader, among the Bedouins. Benefiting from Feisal’s preferential treatment and bestowal of honour, Lawrence signalled certain messages to the Bedouins who recognised his very special status and evidently did see him as a leader. Importantly, Lawrence’s status was earned by his ability to adopt and adapt to certain codes of conduct when other British officers failed. Noticeably, Lawrence makes references to his own she-camels and horses throughout *Seven Pillars*. These passages reflect his understanding of the intricacies of selecting one’s she-camel and horse among the Arab nobility. For instance, Lawrence is aware that she-camels are much preferred over their male counterparts by Arab riders. In this light, Lawrence appears to be adapting to the local chivalric code of the desert campaign, where cavalry was still an integral part of it.

¹⁹⁹ Major Stewart Newcombe, was the Sinai expedition leader in 1914. He was to serve with Lawrence in Arabia later (James, p.77).

²⁰⁰ Henry Hornby was an engineer who joined Newcombe in Arabia (Barr, p.116).

²⁰¹ Herbert Garland, a metallurgist, coordinated the Arabs’ defences at Yanbu; he also helped train the Bedu in Hejaz to use explosives (Barr, p.77).

²⁰² Admiration for Lawrence’s exceptional abilities can be seen in the remarks of Pierce Joyce, George Lloyds and Cyril Wilson. See Barr (2007, p.139).

But what makes Lawrence stand out when others have failed? His fantasy may offer an explanation for his remarkable abilities. It may also explain his inclination to Arab disguise when his fellow British officers rejected it. For Lawrence's masquerade is a quintessential part of his metamorphosis into an Arabian knight; it pronounces his nominal knighthood, as it were. In this light, the masquerade appears to assume a largely symbolic significance, overriding any other practicalities it may offer. Yet this symbolic significance seems to bestow a sense of intrinsic pragmatism on its willing wearer. In other words, Lawrence's high status among the Bedu, which is indicated by his special attire, appears to somehow converge with his earnest desire to truly become an Arabian sheikh/knight. This powerful combination of the right attire and desire seems to endow Lawrence with a confident insight into tribal Arabian life, which proves vitally functional in his campaign.

In a remarkable instance cited in *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence recites how, having been entrusted with the company of "queer fellows" (Lawrence 2011, Loc. 2365)²⁰³ by none but Prince Feisal himself,²⁰⁴ he has had to live up to this great responsibility and adhere to the desert code of justice by enacting it in the 'authentic' manner of a sheikh. He writes of the story of Hamed, the Moor, who shot dead Salem, one of the Ageyl, after a fight broke out between the two men. Weighing up the potential consequences of the deed and the endless reprisals the inevitable act of feud killing may trigger, Lawrence, Feisal's appointee, decided to revert to tribal law and see to its application personally. He writes,

We held a court at once; and after a while Hamed confessed that, he and Salem having had words, he had seen red and shot him suddenly. Our inquiry ended. The Ageyl, as relatives of the dead man, demanded blood for blood. The others supported them; and I tried vainly to talk the gentle Ali round. My head was aching with fever and I could not think; but hardly even in health, with all eloquence, could I have begged Hamed off; for Salem had been a friendly fellow and his sudden murder a wanton crime. Then rose up the horror which would make civilized man shun justice like a plague if he had not the needy to serve him as hangmen for wages. There were other Moroccans in our army; and to let the Ageyl kill one in feud meant reprisals by which our unity would have been endangered. It must be a formal execution, and at last, desperately, I told Hamed that he must die for punishment, and laid the burden of his killing on myself. Perhaps they would count me not qualified for feud. At least no revenge could lie against my followers; for I was a stranger and kinless. I made him

²⁰³ Lawrence is referring to the tribal diversity of his travelling party, which consisted of "four Rifaa and one Merawi Ju-heina as guides, and Arslan, a Syrian soldier-servant [...]; four Ageyl, a Moor, and an Ateibi, Suleiman" (Lawrence Loc. 2365). The party was marching out of Wejh. Needless to say, it would be interesting to speculate on the semantic implications of Lawrence's choice to label the diverse tribesmen as "queer fellows". This will be revisited in the course of the next chapter when the homoerotic strands of Lawrence's narrative in *Seven Pillars* are exposed and analysed.

²⁰⁴ Prince Feisal bin Hussein bin Ali al-Hashemi (1885-1933) is one of Sharif Hussein's four sons. He played a vital role in the Arab Revolt and led his father's Arab army. Lawrence and Feisal's cooperation in the Revolt was behind much of its success.

enter a narrow gully of the spur, a dank twilight place overgrown with weeds. Its sandy bed had been pitted by trickles of water down the cliffs in the late rain. At the end it shrank to a crack a few inches wide. The walls were vertical. I stood in the entrance and gave him a few moments' delay which he spent crying on the ground. Then I made him rise and shot him through the chest. He fell down on the weeds shrieking, with the blood coming out in spurts over his clothes, and jerked about till he rolled nearly to where I was. I fired again, but was shaking so that I only broke his wrist. He went on calling out, less loudly, now lying on his back with his feet towards me, and I leant forward and shot him for the last time in the thick of his neck under the jaw. His body shivered a little, and I called the Ageyl, who buried him in the gully where he was. (Lawrence 2011, Loc. 2409-32)

Lawrence's enforcement of the desert tribal code seems to be empowered by his carefully self-fashioned subjectivity; that is, his *masquerade-aided* embodiment of the figure of an Arabian tribal leader. His subtle ambivalence about the actual act of executing Hamed is swiftly dismissed by his determined personification of the figure of the Arabian sheikh, whose native code of justice proves stronger than the "civilized man's" horror at the prospect of having to serve tribal justice in person. This determination is fuelled by Lawrence's chivalric fantasy; his acceptance among the Bedu would be an acknowledgement to his success. Thus, applying the 'blood-for-blood' principle, would, in this instance, be seen as the embodiment of the responsibility assigned to him by Feisal.

Lawrence is aware of the subtle prerequisites of attaining the rank of a "famous sheikh" among the Arabs. And on this occasion, he is given a golden opportunity to prove it as Feisal's own appointed aide-de-camp. Contrasting the far easier choice of limiting his company to Newcombe, who preferred to stay in his private tent, Lawrence explains the subtleties of accomplishing the special status of an Arab leader, which is, of course, his wish in the first place; he writes, "[a]mong the Arabs there were no distinctions, traditional or natural, except the unconscious power given a famous sheikh by virtue of his accomplishment; and they taught me that no man could be their leader except he ate the ranks' food, wore their clothes, lived level with them, and yet appeared better in himself" (Lawrence 2011, Loc. 2051-57). Lawrence's yearning to "appear better in himself" was cleverly choreographed by his awareness of his dual subjectivity – an Arab sheikh (in the making) and an Englishman (a foreigner) – which was often manipulated throughout his campaign. Indeed, it proved vitally strategic at points. Relevant to this is Lawrence's insistence on carrying out Hamed's punishment, which sheds light on his exploitation of his own schizophrenic subjectivity. Paradoxically, Lawrence is capable of enhancing his image as a strong Arab sheikh, who is willing to serve tribal justice in person, while acknowledging his 'outsider's position', which would prevent an endless cycle of feud killings. In this light, the symbolic significance of

Lawrence's attire and the hybrid status it bestows on him seem to further complicate the role of masquerade in his paradoxically self-fashioned subjectivity.

Compared to Burton's more straightforward, classic use of disguise, Lawrence's emerges as the more complex one. Yet both Orientalists' utilisation of masquerade converges in a common nexus, which alternates between signifying homoerotic connotations on the one hand and implying imperial undertones on the other. Burton's masquerade was more or less purely functional – a camouflage device used for observational purposes – which, along with his fluency in Oriental languages, helped him watch, record and write the Orient. Lawrence's, on the other hand, was more of a fanciful hybridisation device – the complement of his metamorphosis. Indicating his far-from-perfect command of Arabic, Lawrence admitted, "No Easterner could have taken me for an Arab, for a moment" (cited in James, p.70). To be sure, Lawrence's disguise had its practical benefits in camel-riding and blurring his identity as he points out in the *Seven Pillars* (Lawrence 2011, Loc. 1568-76). Yet its significance, I argue, is more *symbolic* than practical. For Lawrence's Arabian masquerade was foremost the nominal accomplishment of his knighthood. In this light, Burton's masquerade emerges as merely a *means to an end*, whereas Lawrence's prove to be (part of) his *end*.

This variance in the functionality of both Orientalists' masquerade is also reflected in the geographical orientation of their respective expeditions in Arabia. As indicated in the previous chapter, Burton's other major attempt at Oriental disguise was his famous embarkation on a Hajj trip to Mecca in 1853. Aiming for a perfect 'cover', Burton circumcised himself before the trip lest he be identified as a non-Muslim imposter.²⁰⁵ It would be intriguing to speculate on what may have compelled Burton to go to such an extreme to authenticate his disguise,²⁰⁶ which, in this case, transcends the persona-assumption and becomes an integral part of the body. While this act highlights another difference in (the 'authenticity' of) Burton's Oriental masquerade, it endows his major disguise saga with a whiff of implied homoeroticism. Why would Burton be concerned that his penis might 'out' him in this (heavily gender-segregated) Muslim-Oriental adventure? All the same, the geographical direction of Burton's pilgrimage adhered to his quest for authentic typicality, for Burton's Hajj route followed that of any Muslim pilgrim residing north of Mecca (i.e. from north to south). Upon casting sight on the Holy Kaaba in Mecca, Burton admitted that "none [of his fellow Muslim companions] felt

²⁰⁵ When in India, Burton had watched 'conversion' circumcision ceremonies for Hindu men who became Muslim with a sense of "special curiosity" (Brodie, p.106). This first-hand observation helped him perform the procedure on himself later before embarking on Hajj in 1853 for "he knew the ritual in detail" (Brodie, p.106).

²⁰⁶ Grant (2008) argues, "In this new personal narrative" Burton would not allow his "*penis*" to "mark the site of difference" (p.73). Grant provides an interesting analysis of Burton's "encryption" of his Oriental Other, Abdullah in the third chapter of his book.

for the moment a deeper emotion than did [he] the Haji from the far-north" (cited in Brodie 1971, pp.120-21). Interestingly, Lawrence, too, reflects on Hajj in *Seven Pillars*; he writes,

My thoughts as we went were how this was the pilgrim road, down which, for uncounted generations, the people of the north had come to visit the Holy City, bearing with them gifts of faith for the shrine; and it seemed that the Arab revolt might be in a sense a return pilgrimage, to take back to the north, to Syria, an ideal for an ideal, a belief in liberty for their past belief in a revelation. (Lawrence 2011, Loc. 838-42)

In his *reverse-Hajj*, however, Lawrence appears to be concerned with an important ideological connection between Islam and Arabism. This connection will be revisited in the next chapter.²⁰⁷

However, it is important to point out that Lawrence's awareness of this connection demonstrates his consciousness of his own multifaceted and paradoxical role in the Arab Revolt. For Lawrence's complex subjectivity is representative/performative of different parties. While enacting (personal) chivalric fantasy, Lawrence is also playing an imperialist role for Britain. Simultaneously, Lawrence, the Arabian knight, is evidently aware of the Arab-nationalist narrative embedded in his adopted role. In this light, the Arab Revolt itself appears to be the convergence point of convenience for these various narratives. Importantly, however, what seems to help enable this unorthodox coalition of narratives in Lawrence's subjectivity and give it further homoerotic significance is Lawrence's own masquerade. For the Sharifian white Arab dress that Lawrence decides to put on is none but Prince Feisal's own *royal wedding garment*, which was sent to him by his aunt in Mecca. Consequently, Lawrence's embracing of the Arab bridal garment can be seen as a symbolic declaration of the metaphorical (modernist) marriage of British imperialism and Arab nationalism that had been brought together by the (romantic) hybrid figure of 'Lawrence of Arabia' and his fantasy. In *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence recalls the moment he was offered Feisal's wedding garment; he writes,

Suddenly Feisal asked me if I would wear Arab clothes like his own while in the camp. I should find it better for my own part, since it was a comfortable dress in which to live Arab-fashion as we must do. Besides, the tribesmen would then understand how to take me. The only wearers of khaki in their experience had been Turkish officers, before whom they took up an instinctive defence. If I wore Meccan clothes, they would behave to me as though I were really one of the leaders; and I might slip in and out of Feisal's tent without making a sensation which he had to explain away each

²⁰⁷ Interestingly, Lawrence's suggested theorisation about the relationship between Arabism and Islam seems to strike a chord with the teachings of the medieval Muslim Imam Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya's (1263-1328). The Imam's teaching would attract the attention of a certain group of anti-Ottoman Arab nationalists, who drew on the connection between Islam and Arabism. This will, of course, be further explored in the next chapter.

time to strangers. I agreed at once, very gladly; for army uniform was abominable when camel-riding or when sitting about on the ground; and the Arab things, which I had learned to manage before the war, were cleaner and more decent in the desert. Hejris was pleased, too, and exercised his fancy in fitting me out in splendid white silk and gold-embroidered wedding garments which had been sent to Feisal lately (was it a hint?) by his great-aunt in Mecca. I took a stroll in the new looseness of them round the palm-gardens of Mubarak and Bruka, to accustom myself to their feel. (Lawrence 2011, Loc. 1568-76)

Thus, like Burton in Arabia, Lawrence's use of disguise involves a remarkable element of homoeroticism. It is significant that Lawrence draws attention to the fact that his new Arab clothes are identical to those of Prince Feisal, the *Arab* leader of the Revolt. Lawrence's joy at embracing the Prince's offer to wear the latter's own bridal gift is highly symbolic, especially when considering the concurrent reallocation of power relations and the new political alliances. Lawrence's acceptance and embodiment of the "splendid white silk and gold-embroidered wedding garments" represents the metaphorical nexus/marriage of imperial interests and anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism.

The bridal aspect to this metaphorical marriage is further enhanced by Lawrence's vivid description of Feisal's force's ceremonial march to Wajh. In a report to Wilson, Lawrence explains how he was taken by the Arabs' style of marching, which was "rather splendid and barbaric" (cited in Barr, p.89), and the two wings of the Arab army that were taking turns in singing to one another (Barr, p.89). Lawrence "rode behind Feisal, dressed in the white wedding clothes and a scarlet headdress" (Barr 2007, p.89). Behind the Sharifian royally-dressed couple marched a jubilant procession,²⁰⁸ which, in Lawrence's words, consisted of

three banners of faded crimson silk with gilt spikes, behind them the drummers playing a march, and behind the wild mass of twelve hundred bouncing camels of bodyguard, packed as closely as they could move, the men in every variety of coloured clothes and the camels nearly as brilliant in their trappings, and the whole crowd singing at the tops of their voices a warsong in honour of Feisal and his family (Lawrence 1917, cited in Barr 2007, p.89).

Much can be said about this procession of men dressed in "every variety of coloured clothes", marching and singing with their matching brilliantly dressed-up beasts. Importantly, the all-male ceremonial procession adds a homoerotic flavour to this bridal-like image, which, indeed, is reminiscent of modern imagery from a Gay Pride parade in the West; albeit à la Arabia.

Yet, Lawrence's loose "white wedding clothes" and headgear appear to blur certain gender constructions when considered cross-culturally. Despite its masculine significance for

²⁰⁸ It must be noted that Sharaf, Feisal's cousin, rode next to Lawrence; however, unlike Lawrence in his Sharifian white wedding clothes, Sharaf was wearing a "henna-dyed robe and black cloak typical of a Juhaynah" (Barr, p.89).

the Arabs, Lawrence's royal masquerade does not quite conform to British ideals of masculinity. Drawing on the connotations of Lawrence's disguise in relation to his identity as a (British) hero in an "exotic 'Oriental'" locale, Dawson (1994) draws attention to the "transgression of gender fixities" implied in Lawrence's embodiment of the role of the soldier, "the most masculine of men", who is also "elaborately arrayed in flowing skirts" (p.167). Already, Lawrence appears to be signifying potentially problematic gender perceptions to his different audiences, the English and the Arabs.

Yet Lawrence is at ease with his hybrid subjectivity and its paradoxical connotations. His conscious self-fashioning after Feisal, whose royal Sharifian wedding dress he adopts, is a sign of his early fascination with him. Indeed, Lawrence appears to be struck by Feisal's charm upon their first encounter:

I felt at first glance that this was the man I had come to Arabia to seek – the leader who would bring the Arab Revolt to full glory. Feisal looked very tall and pillar-like, very slender, in his long white silk robes and his brown head-cloth bound with a brilliant scarlet and gold cord. His eyelids were dropped; and his black beard and colourless face were like a mask against the strange, still watchfulness of his body. His hands were crossed in front of him on his dagger. (Lawrence 2011, Loc. 1038-41)

The homoeroticism of Lawrence's portrayal of Feisal is evident in the phallic imagery he uses (tall, pillar-like, slender, dagger etc.). Importantly, however, Lawrence's object of *homoerotic* fascination (if not desire) is also the 'true' *Arab nationalist* "leader who would bring the Arab Revolt to full glory"; that is, the leader whom the fantasy-driven Lawrence "had come to Arabia to seek" (and perhaps even model himself upon) in order to enact his romantic vision and become a knight.

In this light, the nationalist leader, Feisal, *and* the chivalric fantasist, Lawrence, are *both* after realising their respective objectives, which, as indicated above, happen to converge in the Arab Revolt itself. In other words, the Arab Revolt becomes the manifestation of Lawrence's desire to become a knight and Feisal's enactment of the ideological framework of Arab nationalism.²⁰⁹ For we ought to remember that "The Arab Revolt", in the words of Historian, Suleiman Musa, "was a very important national movement as far as the Arabs were concerned. It meant renaissance. It meant an awakening of a great nation. It was the expression of the national self pride of the Arab people" (*Lawrence of Arabia: the Man and the Myth*, 2012).

²⁰⁹ Of course, the political background to anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism will be discussed in further detail in the next chapter.

Simultaneously, however, the Revolt embodies Lawrence's romantic vision of a (homoerotically-charged) chivalric adventure seeking to reclaim a glorious past through nationalist struggle. For at the heart of Lawrence's chivalric fantasy was also a genuine admiration for nationalist movements. James points out the influence that "the colourful tale of the unification of Italy in the 1860s" had had on British schoolchildren; it was presented as "a high adventure in which courageous visionaries overcame huge obstacles and won a triumph for the noble cause of liberal nationalism" (1996, p.23). In fact, Lawrence admitted to Liddell Hart that he had "a schoolboy ambition to lead a national movement" (cited in James 1996, p.23).

Lawrence's genuine interest in nationalist politics, thus, seems to conveniently converge with and strengthen his (otherwise homoerotic) connection to Feisal and further align their mutual interest in the Arab Revolt on similar grounds. Yet, respectively, Lawrence represents imperial interests, while Feisal is indeed his own people's true nationalist leader. All the same, the Arabs' (non-Islamic) open alliance with Britain is facilitated and mediated by the nodal figure of Lawrence and his masquerade-enhanced subjectivity, hence the complex matrix of converging interests in this affair. To that effect, Lawrence and Feisal's metaphorical marriage (of interests) takes a greater symbolic significance, for it also represents the coalition of British imperial interests and those of Arab nationalists.

Crucially, however, Lawrence's *personal* interest – his original multifaceted fantasy – is to be recognised as the main mastermind of this Anglo-Arab grand episode. For, despite the controversial role he played in supporting and inevitably helping achieve the Allies' imperialist aims in the region,²¹⁰ Lawrence's loyalty is *not* to be simplistically judged in light of one aspect of his identity. Although, no doubt, this would constitute a valid way of looking at the narrative of events, Lawrence's loyalties and what he stood for were not blindly pro-Empire. Lawrence was against the Sykes-Picot Agreement. Barr shows how Lawrence was "horrified" upon learning its details from Mark Sykes, its British co-writers (p.125-126). In Barr's words, Lawrence "was the most ardent opponent of [Sykes's] cherished agreement" (pp.152-153).²¹¹

²¹⁰ That is, the eventual implementation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

²¹¹ Barr shows how the Sykes-Picot Agreement was also disliked by Dr David Hogarth, who voiced his opposition to Mark Sykes (p.152). Yet "Sykes was beginning to learn that Hogarth was not his only adversary. The most ardent opponent of his cherished agreement was Lawrence" (pp.152-53). Consequently, the two men would clash later. In a personal attack on Lawrence, Sykes wrote to Clayton in Aqaba, "Tell him [i.e. Lawrence] now that he is a great man he must behave as such and be broad in his views. Ten years' tutelage under the *Entente* and the Arabs will be a nation. Complete independence means Persia, poverty and chaos. Let him consider this, as he hopes for the people he is fighting for" (cited in Barr, p.164). Lawrence would not put up with Sykes's patronisation. He would write back to him and demanding clarifications and even threatening "trouble"; see Barr (pp.164-65) for more details.

In fact, Lawrence's insistence on reaching Damascus with the Arab army before the Allies was his desperate attempt to secure the Arabs a better place of negotiation.²¹² Even when the Allies had doubts about the success of the Arab Revolt, upon which their expansionist hopes were pinned, Lawrence seemed to believe in it wholeheartedly. He even believed that its successful implementation would go further to stop European "colonial schemes of exploitation", as he puts it: "Neither Sykes nor Picot had believed the thing really possible; but I knew that it was, and believed that after it the vigour of the Arab Movement would prevent the creation – by us or others – in Western Asia of unduly 'colonial' schemes of exploitation" (Lawrence 2011, Loc. 1671-72).

On the other hand, to assume that Lawrence's loyalty lay entirely with the Arabs would also seem rather romantically one-sided. In his own words, Lawrence admits, "I am proudest of my thirty fights in that I did not have any of our own good blood shed. All our subject provinces to me were not worth one dead Englishman" (1979, p.5). So where does Lawrence's loyalty lie? Or, rather, does Lawrence have one or multiple alliances? Is he ultimately fighting for the British or the Arabs, or is he simply fighting for himself (his own vision)? As we have seen, his enactment of his fantasy required the collaboration of these various narratives. In a sense, thus, he appears to have manipulated and employed both forces, Britain and the Arabs, for executing and acting upon *his* own (otherwise impossible) fantasy. Interestingly, this is what Lawrence has to say about his 'duplicity' in the Arab Revolt, acknowledging his very ambivalent positioning in the whole affair:

For my work on the Arab front I had determined to accept nothing. The Cabinet raised the Arabs to fight for us by definite promises of self-government afterwards. Arabs believe in persons, not in institutions. They saw in me a free agent of the British Government, and demanded from me an endorsement of its written promises. So I had to join the conspiracy, and, for what my word was worth, assured the men of their reward. In our two years' partnership under fire they grew accustomed to believing me and to think my Government, like myself, sincere. In this hope they performed some fine things, but, of course, instead of being proud of what we did together, I was continually and bitterly ashamed. (1979, p.5)

He goes on to modify,

In other words, I presumed (seeing no other leader with the will and power) that I would survive the campaigns, and be able to defeat not merely the Turks on the battlefield, but my own country and its allies in the council-chamber. It was an immodest presumption: it is not yet clear if I succeeded: but it is clear that I had no shadow of leave to engage the Arabs, unknowing, in such hazard. I risked the fraud, on

²¹² See Barr (pp.245-48) for details.

my conviction that Arab help was necessary to our cheap and speedy victory in the East, and that better we win and break our word than lose. (1979, p.5)

The admitted ambivalence on Lawrence's part is an admission to his loyalty to his *own personal vision* of the whole affair. His central role at maintaining the Anglo-Arab marriage was not particularly concerned with either party's foremost interest. It was a means for enacting his own vision.

Lawrence's focus on achieving his own vision is reminiscent of what Tabachnick refers to as the Orientalist "author's quest for the absolute in the Arabian desert" (1973, p.22). As highlighted in Chapter One, Charles Doughty's *Arabia Deserta* had a significant impact on Lawrence, who aspired to reach its 'excellent' style in writing *Seven Pillars*. In his study of the two Anglo-Arab travel writers' magnum opuses, Tabachnick spots certain tendencies in both writers' narratives; he writes,

[...] *Seven Pillars*, like *Arabia Deserta*, is a book first and foremost about its author's quest for the absolute in the Arabian desert. We no more accept Doughty's explanation, that his two-year exposure to hardship and danger was the simple fruit of his desire to contribute to geography and the English language, than we ever fully understand the motives behind Lawrence's striving for his unstated and apparently unattainable goal. (p.22)

This "quest for the absolute" can also be detected in Burton's approach to the Arab East and his determination to unveil accounts of 'Other' sexuality, be they 'real' or 'imaginary'. While this quest realigns both Orientalists within the tradition of Anglo-Arab travel writing, it exposes the discrete nature of the visions that such authors wanted (and were arguably able to) impose on their reading of the Arab East. Thus the way in which Lawrence manipulated his complex (and often conflicting) alliances in order to achieve his personal vision can be seen within this narrative of subjective quest.

Indeed, in his epilogue to *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence admits to his fantasy-driven subjective narrative in this saga; he writes, "Damascus had not seemed a sheath for my sword, when I landed in Arabia: but its capture disclosed the exhaustion of my main springs of action. the strongest motive throughout had been a personal one [...]" (2011, Loc. 9636-40). Lawrence continues,

We took Damascus, and I feared. More than three arbitrary days would have quickened in me a root of authority. There remained historical ambition, insubstantial as a motive by itself. I had dreamed, at the city school in Oxford, of hustling into form, while I lived, the new Asia which time was inexorably bringing upon us. Mecca was to lead to Damascus; Damascus to Anatolia, and afterwards to Bagdad; and then there

was Yemen. Fantasies, these will seem to, to such as are able to call my beginning an ordinary effort. (Loc. 9640-46)

With these lines, Lawrence seals his “personal narrative”, in *Seven Pillars*. Not only does he admit to the strength of his motive, but he also highlights its fantastical origin. After all, Lawrence was very much aware of his extremely paradoxical role in the whole affair. He also knew that the Arabs “were fighting to get rid of Empire, not to win it” (2011, Loc. 1200), unlike his fellow British imperialists and their French counterparts. Yet quite paradoxically, he manages to enable (only if briefly) a marriage between ultimately different (and opposite) interests through playing the oxymoronic roles of a reverse-pilgrim, an Anglo-Arabian knight/sheikh and a reverse-crusader. The modern(ist) aspects of Lawrence’s romantic vision are what I am going to explore in what follows.

Lawrence: the fantasist and the co-artist

They [the Arabs] were a people of primary colours, or rather of black and white, who saw the world always in contour. They were a dogmatic people, despising doubt, our modern crown of thorns. They did not understand our metaphysical difficulties, our introspective questionings. (Lawrence 1979, p.16)

Lawrence is an extraordinary figure. He is the last man who tries to be an archaic classical hero in the modern age. (Rory Stewart, cited in *Lawrence of Arabia: the Man and the Myth*, 2012)

As we have seen, the largely personal roots of Lawrence’s involvement in the war in the East yield certain paradoxical connotations in his constructed subjectivity. These paradoxical implications are also reflected in the schism between the romantic and the modernist narratives in Lawrence’s fantasy and its enactment. Lawrence’s attraction to the Arab East lay in its connection to the chivalric past and, as Dawson puts it, the “romantic adventure” it would potentially offer (p.174). As Leed argues, this was an “escape from modernity” towards simplicity (cited in Dawson, p.17). Yet, in order to enact his romantic vision (to become a knight), Lawrence drew on the modern(ist) regrouping of power relations. However, even the romantic concept of ‘restoring glory to the Arab nation’ in itself proves paradoxically more complex, as Lawrence would discover.

Lawrence observes how the blood feud-divided clans of Arabia, between whom neither Islam nor Arabism had created any sense of unity, appear touched by the nationalist sentiment of the Arab Revolt. As the march to Wajh continues in the colourful manner depicted by Lawrence above, Abd el Kerim, one of the Juhaynah leaders, is suddenly struck by the view of the marching Arab camp. At nightfall, Lawrence observes,

We hungered for sleep, and at last he rose to go, but, chancing to look across the valley, saw the hollows beneath and about us winking with the faint camp-fires of the scattered contingents. He called me out to look, and swept his arm round, saying half-sadly, 'We are no longer Arabs but a People'. He was half-proud too, for the advance on Wejh was their biggest effort; the first time in memory that the manhood of a tribe, with transport, arms, and food for two hundred miles, had left its district and marched into another's territory without the hope of plunder or the stimulus of blood feud. Abd el Kerim was glad that his tribe had shown this new spirit of service, but also sorry; for to him the joys of life were a fast camel, the best weapons, and a short sharp raid against his neighbour's herd: and the gradual achievement of Feisal's ambition was making such joys less and less easy for the responsible. (2011, Loc. 1975-82)

While the background to Arab nationalism will be discussed in further detail in Chapter Four, it is important to note the modern connotations of the movement and its implications on *changing* the clans' lives. Abd el Kerim's (pessimistic?) ambivalence towards it seems to taint its romantic ideal with a modernist trope. In this light, intra-Arab unity is as much an achievement as is the grander inter-Euro-Arab coalition. In a sense, the modern concept of Arab nationalism in itself is as modernist as the Anglo-Arab coalition.²¹³

Nonetheless, the (romantic) nationalist spirit of Arab Revolt seems to have endowed the Arabs with an unprecedented sense of unity that is paradoxically based on their brief affair with the (Christian) Allies – not their centuries-old union with the (Muslim) Ottoman-Turks. Lawrence observes the emergence of the nationalist narrative in the Arab Revolt and the Sharif's refusal to "give a religious twist to his rebellion":

His fighting creed was nationality. The tribes knew that the Turks were Moslems, and thought that the Germans were probably true friends of Islam. They knew that the British were Christians, and that the British were their allies. In the circumstances, their religion would not have been of much help to them, and they had put it aside. 'Christian fights Christian, so why should not Mohammedans do the same? What we want is a Government which speaks our own language of Arabic and will let us live in peace. Also we hate those Turks'. (2011, Loc. 1205-10)

By breaking away from the 'old conventions', the Arab Revolt emerges outstandingly modern and modernist in its beliefs and objectives. To all intents and purposes, this has suited Lawrence's own romantic agenda – his chivalric-style engagement in a nationalist revolution – and enabled him to enact his fantastical vision. Thus, the enactment of Lawrence's (past-oriented) fantasy was paradoxically dependent on the emerging modern breakdown of conventional alliances.

²¹³ As Youssef Choueiri (2001) puts it, Arab nationalism is "a child of the modern world" in that its emergence is fairly recent (p.56). More importantly; however, "it constitutes a definite break with the past" (p.56). This, will, of course, be further explored in the next chapter.

Yet the roots of Lawrence's involvement in the whole affair may appear incidental. For Lawrence's connection to the region had been originally epistemological. As James (1996) observes, "After all he had come to Syria as a scholar whose primary concern was the country's distant past. But the outbreak of war turned him into one of the gravediggers of the Ottoman empire and, in time, he occupied a position in which he had considerable influence over the future of its former provinces" (p.60). Again, the *temporal* aspect of Lawrence's engagement acquires further significance. For "What [Lawrence] had seen and learned in Syria suddenly assumed a formidable importance" (James, p.60). Lawrence's insight into local Syrian life during his time at Karkamis and other locations in his archaeological tour in Syria proves vital in fuelling his chivalric fantasy, which, until then, was limited to the realm of the textual past (i.e. literature and history).

For Lawrence's original attraction to the 'Unchanging East' had been an attraction to what he perceived as the static museum of the chivalric Levant. In other words, his pre-war archaeological expedition in Syria can be seen as an historical visit to an art exhibition – the Crusaders' architecture –, which had been preserved in the museum of the 'Unchanging East'. However, his interaction with Syrian local life and the outbreak of the war changed his positioning from an admiring passive spectator to an inspired active participator, willing to interact with (and modify) the reality of what appears to have been for him principally an art gallery or a museum.

From developing an intimate 'friendship' with Dahoum to getting enthusiastically engaged with the local affairs of the Syrian peasantry, Lawrence was no longer a passive spectator. James (1996) notes how between 1911 and 1914, Lawrence's interest in the complex and often hard life of the peasantry was, in fact, related to his knowledge and interest in the European medieval period; he writes, "As a medievalist, [Lawrence] would have recognised many features of Syrian life which were the same as those of medieval Europe. Rural and desert society was still dominated by feudal sheikhs, who had armed retinues, shepherds and tenantry and levied *khawah* (protection money) on the peasantry" (p.60). The Ottoman government had preserved the "ancient rights" of these feudal lords, which made the peasantry even more helpless. So, "Faced with the wretchedness of the Jerablus peasantry, victims of landlords and moneylenders and, from 1912, the bullying of German overseers,"²¹⁴ Lawrence cast himself in the role of a guardian justiciar" (James, p.61). Mrs

²¹⁴ In one incident, Lawrence challenged the German overseers who had beaten Dahoum when the latter asked for his pay; "Lawrence demanded and got an apology after threatening to thrash the man responsible" (James, p.65).

Winifred Fontana, wife of the British Consul at Aleppo, remarks Lawrence's (rather flamboyant) behaviour at Jerablus, the headquarters of the Karkamis dig; she writes,

Lawrence cast much of his absorbed and discomforting aloofness, together with his visiting clothes and, clad in shirts and a buttonless shirt held together with a gaudy Kurdish belt, looked what he was: a young man of rare power and considerable physical beauty. The belt was fastened on the left hip with a huge bunch of many-coloured tassels, symbol, plain to all Arabs, that he was seeking a wife. I have not seen such gold hair before – nor such intensely blue eyes. (cited in Garnett, p.15)

Lawrence's selective adoption of items of local attire is a sign of his gradual integration into the scene. This, I argue, marks the beginning of Lawrence's change in positioning (from spectator to participant).

As James points out, Lawrence's "reaction was true to the chivalric code of his warrior heroes, which enjoined the knight to protect those too weak to fend for themselves" (p.61). At this stage, thus, the reality of Lawrence's museum, along with the grander political surroundings, appear to appeal to his fantasist's chivalric code of honour and invite him to participate in one of the most dramatic historical tableaux in the region. In other words, Lawrence, the *medievalist*, finds himself in ideal circumstances, which trigger the *fantasist* in him. Consequently, he moves beyond touring the medieval gallery of Syria into taking part in it in order to achieve a sense of poetic justice. James shows how Lawrence started to see himself as a "local squire"; in 1911, he wrote to his parents saying: "I feel on my native heath [...] and am on the pitch of settling in a new Carcemish as a sheikh" (cited in James, p.61). By 1913, his brother, Will, who came to visit him, observed how Lawrence had become "a great lord in this place" (cited in James, p.61).

However, what started off as a chivalric interest in local social politics was rapidly developing into a greater scheme of affairs. Lawrence was being exposed to the growing nationalist ideology and the ambitions of Syrians. From his Arabic tutor, Miss Fareedah el Akle, he learnt more about the aspirations of the Arabic-speaking Levantines (James, p.59-60). With the First World War approaching, Lawrence, the "chance witness" (James, p.59) to an era in its closing stage, was in the best of positions to not only affect the inevitable forthcoming change (in order to preserve the antiquity of the Orient), but also edit it out and perhaps even enrich it with his own chivalric contribution. In other words, Lawrence may have seen his involvement necessary to preserve what he appears to have perceived as an existing continuum of European medievalism, which, given the chance, he would naturally endeavour to put right. In a sense, what Lawrence was seeking is quite paradoxical. On the one hand, he wanted to change the lives of the Syrian peasantry and support the cause of Arab nationalists. On the

other, he opposed modernising change, which was the antithesis of his Oriental tour. In brief, Lawrence wanted to modify/edit the Syrian tableau of chivalric past *without* modernising it. Yet, the dilemma that faced Lawrence lay in the difficulty of attempting to preserve the antiquity of the exhibition – the Levantine East – at a time when the whole region was being dragged into a modern war, hence Lawrence's need to *fully* integrate with the scene.

If we accept the analogy that Lawrence's original scholarly sojourn in the Levant is similar to a spectator's or an art historian's visit to a museum, we can perhaps then see how his gradual integration into the scene and interaction with it would turn him into a critic. The outbreak of the war, on the other hand, would complete the integration and turn Lawrence – the spectator/art historian, critic/squire – into a full-blown *co-artist*. In other words, Lawrence's increasing interaction with his art object, along with the greater overwhelming political circumstances, seem to induce his interventionist metamorphosis, which is essential for editing the current scene without compromising its timeless antiquity. Remarkably, Lawrence himself appears to have metaphorically anticipated his own trajectory (from spectator to actor). By 1914, his career potentials were pointing him towards academia, thanks to his award-winning thesis on the Crusaders' castles in Syria. However, in a semi-ironic statement, he announces, "I am not going to put all my energies into rubbish like writing history, or becoming an archaeologist, [...] I would rather write a novel, or even become a newspaper correspondent" (cited in James, p.3).

Indeed, Lawrence, the co-artist, was no longer simply recording history; with the beginning of the war, he started narrating it and shaping it in accordance with his own chivalric, past-orientated agenda. From targeting the Ottoman railway – an unmistakable mark of modernity – to despising the modernising efforts of the French and American missionaries in the Levant,²¹⁵ Lawrence was desperate to preserve an innate sense of the glorious Arab past and emphasise the Arabist agenda of the Revolt. As James (1996) points out, "For Lawrence, the railway symbolised the penetration of Syria by foreign influences and the wider forces of change which were altering the way of life of its people. He resented both" (p.66). Relevant to this is the highly selective way, which, Lawrence believed, was best to educate and improve the lives of the Syrian peasantry, including his own beloved Dahoum's, who Lawrence observed, was "beginning to use his reason as well as his instinct" (cited in James, p.68). No

²¹⁵ As we will see in the next chapter, the Protestant and Catholic mission schools would have a vital role in instigating/feeding a certain strand of Arab nationalism. James shows how, "By 1914 French schools had a roll of 100,000 pupils, a tenth of the entire school population of the Ottoman empire" (p.66). The missions' educational and cultural impact is what Lawrence despised about them as he saw it as a foreign polluting element to the purity of the "untouched" Arab.

doubt, Lawrence cared about Dahoum and his ambition of self-improvement. However, as James puts it, “Dahoum’s education would have to be carefully controlled, even censored” lest it corrupt his “endearing innocence which Lawrence found very refreshing” (p.68). The image of improvement Lawrence seemed to envisage for the Arabs and their welfare was strictly controlled.²¹⁶

In his own words, Lawrence despised “The perfectly helpless vulgarity of the half-Europeanised Arab” and thought it was “appalling”; in his opinion: “Better a thousand times, the Arab untouched. The foreigners come out here always to teach, whereas they had very much better learn, for in everything but wits and knowledge, the Arab is generally the better man of the two” (cited in James, p.67). This attitude is key to the great emphasis Lawrence seems to place on preserving a certain vision of the Arab past and preventing modernity, European or otherwise, from corrupting it. In a sense, it also represents his integration with the scene he had been studying and his attempts to maintain its historical continuity, albeit with the ‘right’ amendments stipulated by his personal squire’s (or sheikh’s) chivalric code of honour.

In the same vein, one can see how these pre-war practices in Syria were preparing Lawrence for his ‘full’ metamorphosis into an Arabian knight in the Arab Revolt in Arabia. His insistence on respecting and abiding by the Bedouins’ codes is to be considered analogically. From adopting Meccan dress to excelling at camel-riding, heat-endurance and many other skills his fellow Arabs had mastered,²¹⁷ Lawrence managed to acquire a remarkable status among his fellow Arabs. He was, indeed, accepted as one of them. To Miss Fareedah el Akle, Lawrence’s Arabic teacher, Dahoum said:

You ask why we love Lawrence? and who can help loving him? He is our brother, our friend, and leader. He is one of us, there is nothing we do he cannot do, and he even excels us in doing it. He takes such an interest in us and cares for our welfare. We

²¹⁶ Lawrence even considered setting up his own school (James, p.68). When choosing books for Dahoum in 1911, Lawrence approached Mrs Reider, from the Jebel mission, “What I want for the donkey boy [i.e. Dahoum] was a history book or a geography which should be readable and yet Arab. I cannot give him such productions as those Miss Holmes uses, since nothing with a taste of Frangi [i.e. foreign] was to enter Jerablus by my means. I have no wish to do more for the boy than give him a chance to help himself: ‘education’ I have had so much of, & it is rot: saving your presence! [...]” (cited in Garnett, p.53).

²¹⁷ In his testimony of Lawrence’s extraordinary abilities, Sergeant Instructor W. H. Brook, wrote, “It was astonishing to see how that slight Englishman could beat the Arabs at their own game. At camel-riding and shooting, in endurance and courage he was their master ... He seemed immune to the fiercest heat, more so than the Arabs ... Many times, when resting after a strenuous march, have I seen him engrossed in a small red book, his constant companion” (cited in Garnett, pp.17-18). As pointed out earlier in this chapter, the “small red book” was one of Lawrence’s favourite chivalric romances, *Morte Darthur*, whose significance will be further explored in the course of this thesis.

respect him and greatly admire his courage and bravery: we love him because he loves us and we would lay down our lives for him. (cited in Garnett 1951, pp.14-15)

This status is similarly replicated amongst the Bedouins in Arabia. In *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence observes how he has “become a principal of the Revolt”:

The men were a mad lot, sharpened to distraction by hope of success. They would listen to no word but mine, and brought me their troubles for judgement. In the six days' raid there came to a head, and were settled, twelve cases of assault with weapons, four camel-liftings, one marriage, two thefts, a divorce, fourteen feuds, two evil eyes, and a bewitchment. These decisions were arrived at despite my imperfect knowledge of Arabic. (2011, Loc. 5384-91)

This romantic image of Lawrence's integration with the various tableaux of Arabian life is part of his fantasy, of course. Simultaneously, it represents the stage of his seemingly seamless assimilation into the larger setting of the Arabian epic. This is the stage when Lawrence, the medievalist art enthusiast/spectator becomes *part* of his critiqued scene – a fantasist *actor*, as it were.

Yet the romantic spontaneity of the whole image is somehow tainted by Lawrence's unabashed acknowledgement of his own not-so-romantic ‘duplicity’; he continues,

The fraudulence of my business stung me. Here were more fruits, bitter fruits, of my decision, in front of Akaba, to become a principal of the Revolt. I was raising the Arabs on false pretences, and exercising a false authority over my dupes, on little more evidence than their faces, as visible to my eyes weakly watering and stinging after a year's exposure to the throb, throb of sunlight. (2011, Loc. 5384-91)

Lawrence's blatant consciousness of his double-dealing disturbs the romantic aura surrounding his chivalric fantasy and its seemingly seamless enactment. As implied earlier, the romantic essence of Lawrence's chivalric wish is also downplayed by certain (modernist) underpinnings in its execution, which render the whole fantasy very problematic indeed.

Judging Lawrence's conduct (moral and otherwise) may be a subjective and controversial matter. However, if his success or failure in enacting his fantasy were to be an indicative parameter, the outcome itself would be equally problematic. Although Lawrence managed to be “at the mainspring of a national movement” (cited in James, p.40)²¹⁸ that ‘liberated’ the Arab East from the Ottoman-Turks, his other quest – to restore the Arabs' ‘past glory’ while preserving the antiquity of the East – may not have been as successful. After all, Lawrence's campaign contributed to one of the most dramatic *changes* in the history of the

²¹⁸ As indicated earlier, this was the fourth reason that Lawrence gave to George Kidston when the latter asked him about the rationale of his close involvement in the Arab Revolt (Barr, p.40). Interestingly, Lawrence referred to it as “intellectual curiosity” as opposed to his first “personal” reason – his liking of a “particular Arab”, as explained earlier.

region, whose implications continue to reverberate.²¹⁹ The modern national borders of the region, which remain largely the same today, had been drawn as a result of the Allies' victory at the end of the First World War. Indeed, the arrival of the British and the French to replace the Ottomans exposes the not-so-successful narratives in Lawrence's enactment of his romantic vision. After all, the region had been ushered into 'modernity proper' and modern life under the new, more technologically advanced, occupying forces.

In a letter to his sister, General Allenby explains the desperate situation that resulted from the imperial powers' dealings and the contradictory promises they made to one another and to the Arabs,²²⁰ which by the end of the war, would now have to be fulfilled; he writes,

The situation here bristles with difficulties. As you know we have fanned the flames of the Arab Revolt and sympathised with money and men in the Sharif's attempt to form a free Arab nation. Up to now the Arabs have a blind confidence in all the Englishmen who have been in contact with them. They almost literally eat out of our hands. The Arab cause has been successful beyond the wildest dreams of anybody. That is just the trouble [...]" (cited in Barr, pp.298-99)

Allenby's letter seems to sum up the reality of the short-lived marriage between the Allies and the Arabs. The dream does indeed turn into a nightmare and the previous romantic jubilation of victory turns into conflict. While the outcome of the Arab Revolt will be further discussed in relation to the wider cultural and literary change in the Arab world in the next chapter, I would like to recap on Lawrence's fantasy and its relation to his use of 'text' and 'experience' in his interaction with the Arab East.

In testimony to Lawrence's role in the Arab Revolt, George Lloyd noted how Lawrence had "done wonderfully good work and will some day be able to write a unique book. Generally the kind of men capable of these adventures lack the pen and the wit to record them adequately. Luckily Lawrence is specially gifted in both" (cited in Barr, p.171).²²¹ True to Lloyd's prophecy, Lawrence would soon publish his masterpiece, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1922), which in his words, "does not pretend to be impartial"; Lawrence continues, "I was fighting for my hand, upon my midden. Please take it as a personal narrative pieced out of memory. I

²¹⁹ Barr links the complex consequences of the Arab Revolt and the ensuing implementation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement to the continuing conflict between the West and the Arabs today. He argues that " [...] in the Arab mind, Britain's failure to honour its initial promise has created a reservoir of deep resentment on which opponents of the West continue regularly to draw. In his first public statement after the terrorist attack of 11th September 2001, Osama Bin Laden – who was born in Riyadh and educated in Jeddah – reminded the world that 'our nation has been tasting humiliation and contempt for more than eighty years'. To the Arabs today, the British role behind their uprising ninety years ago remains unforgotten and largely unforgiven" (pp.313-14).

²²⁰ Sir Edmund Allenby (1861-1936) was sent to Egypt in 1917 where he "brought a sense of purpose to the demoralized Egyptian Expeditionary Force"; he was known for capturing Jerusalem in 1917 (Barr, p.xi).

²²¹ George Lloyd (1879-1941), a "fervent imperialist", was involved in the Arab Bureau in Cairo; he was a "Turkish-speaking intelligence officer" (Barr, p.xiv).

could not make proper notes: indeed it would have been a breach of my duty to the Arabs if I had picked such flowers while they fought" (*Author's Preface*, 1979, p.vi). Lawrence's admission to the subjectivity of his narrative gives way to considering the book an artistic product of his own fancy. In this light, it would be interesting to view the book as a textual reproduction of Lawrence's experiential interaction with the Arab East. Nonetheless, the book is also based on the grand historical narrative of the Arab Revolt. In a sense, it is a conflation/displacement of writing genres, literary-fictional and historical; its personalised focus on the subjective is an unmistakable marker of its partial adherence to the era's modernist literary spirit.²²² Yet we ought to bear in mind that the book is a continuation of the tradition of Anglo-Arab travel writing, which was initiated by Kinglake and Doughty, as highlighted in Chapter One. Considering Lawrence's conscious appreciation of Doughty's *Arabia Deserta*, Lawrence's literary experimentalism in *Seven Pillars* can be seen as his own contribution to the existing tradition of Anglo-Arabian travel writing. As we have seen, Burton's narrative would also fit in with this tradition.²²³ What Lawrence's narrative adds to it, however, is an aptly modern touch, evident in his conscious emphasis on the role of "memory" and "personal narrative" in piecing together an individual's comprehension of a grand historical event, his role in it and the impact it had had on him in relation to the larger society. In this light, the hybrid genre of Lawrence's book does indeed lend itself to be classified and read as a work of life writing.

While it would be intriguing to follow this strand in analysing Lawrence's work, I would like to narrow my analysis down to tackling the modernist aspects of Lawrence's book for the purpose of my research focus. While this will be done in the next section, I am now going to consider the book in light of Lawrence's Orientalist manipulation of 'text' and 'experience'. For the book can also be seen as the personal account of Lawrence, the co-artist/actor, whose active integration in the tableau of the East marks his gradual metamorphosis from scholar to soldier. Thus, not unlike Burton in this sense, Lawrence too appears to demonstrate the anti-mimetic abilities of the Arab East. In a way, his chivalric adventure in the Arab Revolt can be

²²² Apart from the "blurring of distinction between genres", Peter Barry (2009) lists the following general features as characteristic of modernist literature; the list includes, writers' emphasis on "impressionism and subjectivity, that is, on *how* we see rather than *what* we see", "A movement [...] away from objectivity provided by such features as omniscient external narration [...]", "a new liking for fragmented forms", etc. (p.79). As I will show in the next section, Lawrence's narrative in *Seven Pillars* adheres to all of these trends. It is also interesting to consider the symbolic significance of the book's publication in 1922, a year that is considered by many as the defining moment for high modernism in English literature.

²²³ Remarkably, all three writers (Burton, Doughty and Lawrence) resort to disguise in their narrative. Burton impersonated the hybrid Oriental Hajji Abdullah, while Doughty took on the persona of Khalil when travelling from Syria to Arabia. Lawrence's act of masquerade, however, appears to be the more complex one, for he openly celebrated his hybridity and used it to achieve his means while interacting with the Arab East.

seen as the physical enactment of the medley of medieval romances that had captivated him since his tender years. As pointed out earlier, Lawrence had been reading and rereading the *Morte Darthur* during his engagement in the desert campaign.²²⁴ As shown above and implied by others, Lawrence's heroic engagement in the epic of the Arab Revolt is, partially at least, modelled on the epic conduct of his literary heroes.²²⁵ In this light, his *textual* (personal) account, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, can be seen as the literary reproduction of not only his *experience* in the Revolt, but also the *literary influences* that had fuelled his fantasy in the first place. The book's generic hybridity, a personalised narrative of a grand historical event, recalls Lawrence's pre-war prophetic contemplation about his future career. Indeed, Lawrence did not *passively* apply all his "energies into such rubbish like writing history"; instead, he did "write a [spectacular] novel", that is uniquely narrated by his very own Anglo-Arabian *knigh-Rawi* who *made* history, thanks to the Orient's enabling anti-mimetic powers in Orientalist discourse. Remarkably, Lawrence's manipulation of 'text' and 'experience' in the Arab Orient brings him closer to one of his favourite authors, Charles Doughty. As illustrated earlier, Lawrence was very much aware of Doughty importance in so far as the tradition of Anglo-Arab travel writing is concerned. In his 1921 introduction to a new edition of Doughty's *Arabia Deserta*, Lawrence draws on the intrinsic relationship between writing a book ('text') and the journey ('experience') of its author in relation to Doughty's *Arabia Deserta*; he writes, "Mr Doughty was not content till he had made the book justify the journey as much as the journey justified the book, and in the double power, to go and to write, he will not soon find his rival" (cited in Tabachnick 1973, p.13).

Whether Lawrence lives up to be Doughty's rival may be a matter of subjective speculation. Nonetheless, he certainly produced his own vision of writing a book and going on a journey in the Arabian desert in the tradition of Anglo-Arab travel writing. By so doing,

²²⁴ One of the references Lawrence makes to the romance is on (Loc.1353-54) in *Seven Pillars*. As indicated above, Brook remarks Lawrence's obsession with the "small red book", which he calls his "constant companion" (cited in Garnett, pp.17-18).

²²⁵ As pointed out earlier in this chapter, James argues that Lawrence's awareness of his illegitimacy added to his sense of identification with Galahad, the illegitimate son of Lancelot and Elaine (p.39). Yet Lawrence's conduct and eventual destiny can also be read in the shadow of Lancelot himself, who betrayed his leader, Arthur, by falling in love with his wife, Guinevere. Of course, Lawrence did not fall in love with Feisal's (non-existent) wife. If anything, Lawrence appears to have been attracted to the man himself. However, Lawrence's betrayal of Feisal is symbolised by his inevitable role in destroying the dream of Arab nationalism of creating a pan-Arab Kingdom – thanks to the implementation of the Sykes-Picot agreement after the end of the War. Like Lancelot, Lawrence betrayed his leader despite himself. In addition to embodying a melange of various knights' characteristics, Lawrence appears to draw on other themes common in medieval chivalric romances while rendering and representing them with a touch of the homoerotic. Indeed, his 'unfulfilled' love for Dahoum and the way the latter's tragic death dooms it to failure evokes elements of the theme of 'courtly love', which prevailed in much of Lawrence's favourite literature. I shall come back to this theme in my analysis of Lawrence's portrayal of homoerotic romance in the Arab camp in the next chapter.

Lawrence further complicates the causative relationship between the two in Orientalist discourse. Indeed, Lawrence appears to draw a paradoxical connection between ‘text’ and ‘experience’ in relation to his own book and story; he writes,

Our life is not summed up in what I have written (there are things not to be repeated in cold blood for very shame); but what I have written was in and of our life. Pray God that men reading the story will not, for love of the glamour of strangeness, go out to prostitute themselves and their talents in serving another race. (1979, p.10)

The dichotomy between the romantic quest for “glamour” and the pessimistic tropes in Lawrence’s narrative in *Seven Pillars* is what I am going to address next. By examining his own testimonies, I would like to explore the extent to which Lawrence’s enactment of his fantasy has been a success, or, indeed, a failure.

“Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph”; or is it?

To S.A.

I love you, so I drew these tides of men into my hands
and wrote my will across the sky in stars
To earn you Freedom, the seven pillared house,
that your eyes might be shining for me
When we came.

Death seemed my servant on the road, till we were near
and saw you waiting:
When you smiled, and in sorrowful envy he outran me
and took you apart:
Into his quietness.

Love, the way-weary, groped to your body, our brief wage
ours for the moment
Before earth’s soft hand explored your shape, and the blind
worms grew fat upon
Your substance.

Men prayed me that I set our work, the inviolate house,
as a memory of you.
But for fit monument I shattered it, unfinished: and now
The little things creep out to patch themselves hovels
in the marred shadow
Of your gift.

Much can be said about Lawrence's poignant mourning of the tragic death of Selim Ahmed (Dahoum) to whom *Seven Pillars* is dedicated.²²⁶ In Aldrich's words, "The poem is a declaration of love, romantic but also erotic. It provides a justification for Lawrence's mission, an obituary for his dead friend and a *mea culpa* about his inability to save Dahoum or truly to win freedom for the Arabs" (2003, p.77). However, what I am going to reflect on is the symbolic significance of the poem in relation to the end-result of Lawrence's Arabian adventure as well as his motives to join the Arab Revolt. I would like to show how the poem's changing tone (from romantic hopefulness to macabre imagery and despair) appears to reflect what Lawrence himself may have felt towards the accomplishment of his own role in the Revolt. Effectively, the poem is nothing short of a dream turning into a nightmare, where success is abruptly (and unjustly) replaced by failure. Importantly, however, this failure seems to spring from Lawrence's inability to fulfil an aspect of his (otherwise successful) wish. For Lawrence actively "shatter[s]" the "involute house" rendering it "unfinished" upon hearing of Dahoum's premature death.

In other words, the juxtaposition of what seems to be the steady progress of Lawrence's fantasy enactment with the sudden disruption caused by Dahoum's tragic death sheds light on the significance of the homoerotic narrative in Lawrence's fantasy. We ought to remember that, by his own admission, Lawrence's primary rationale for joining the Arab Revolt was his liking of a "particular Arab" for whose race "freedom [...] would be an acceptable present". Lawrence's fondness of Dahoum is also evident in what he wrote on a "flyleaf of a poetry book" in 1919: "I wrought for him freedom to lighten his sad eyes: but he had died waiting for me. So I threw my gift away and now not anywhere will I find rest and peace" (cited in Aldrich, p.76). Lawrence's mother also observed what appear to be symptoms of this restlessness in her son. After his (other) failure at the Peace Conference, Lawrence "would sometimes sit the entire morning between breakfast and lunch in the same position, without moving, and with the same expression on his face" (Garnett, p.18). Garnett links this to Lawrence's dispiritedness at the loss of the "Arab cause" (p.18), which, as we can see, appears to be interlinked with the loss of his beloved Dahoum.

Of course, what constitutes the *full* accomplishment of Lawrence's success (from his personal viewpoint) is very important as it provides an insight into the relationship between the intricate narratives of his motive for 'going East'. In this case, it seems to highlight the

²²⁶ Dahoum is thought to have died in Karkamis where he worked as a site guard after Lawrence left for Oxford in 1914. (Aldrich, p.76) When the war broke out, Lawrence was posted to Cairo for two years (p.76). In the meantime disease and famine spread in Karkamis during which period Dahoum is thought to have perished; Lawrence learnt about his death when he was fighting in Arabia (p.76).

homoerotic element in Lawrence's venture, which, by the premature death of Dahoum, renders the overall realisation of Lawrence's dream painfully lacking. Indeed, despite the initial success of reaching Damascus and defeating the Turks, Lawrence "thr[o]w[s] [his] gift away". In this light, the death of Dahoum culminates in an *anti-climax*, which, in turn, crystallises the significance of the homoerotic *within* the (larger) chivalric narrative in Lawrence's fantasy-driven adventure and positions it centrally. After all, Dahoum was presumably "the only person [...] with whom [Lawrence] had ever been in love".

Yet, for Lawrence, Dahoum, with his ambitions for self-improvement, was also representative of the whole Arab nationalist cause at whose "mainspring" Lawrence admittedly wanted to be. Thus, for Lawrence, the intricate connection between the homoerotic and the nationalist materialises further and converges metaphorically in the figure of Dahoum. In this light, the sense of annihilation in his poem may also be a reference to the incomplete accomplishment of the Arab national movement. For even the initial brief jubilation felt upon reaching Damascus and defeating the Ottomans is eventually overshadowed by the Arab Revolt's failure to secure full independence for the Arabs, thanks to the implementation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement.²²⁷ This, of course, casts a further anti-climax on Lawrence's otherwise partially successful achievement, hence his dismay after the Peace Conference as observed by his mother. Metaphorically, Dahoum's compound subjectivity, as Lawrence's lover and representative of the nationalist cause, gains a double significance in his death. Dahoum's death represents the anti-climatic demise of both: the homoerotic and the nationalist narratives in Lawrence's fantasy, whose enactment appears to have been short lived, after all.²²⁸

²²⁷ Describing the jubilant scene at Damascus upon its conquest by the Arab army, Lawrence writes, "When we came in there had been some miles of people greeting us, now there were thousands for every hundred then. Every man, woman and child in this city of a quarter-million souls seemed in the streets, waiting only the spark of our appearance to ignite their spirits. Damascus went mad with joy. The men tossed up their tar-bushes to cheer, the women tore off their veils. Householders threw flowers, hangings, carpets, into the road before us: their wives leaned, screaming with laughter, through the lattices and splashed us with bath-dippers of scent. Poor dervishes made themselves our running footmen in front and behind, howling and cutting themselves with frenzy; and over the local cries and the shrilling of women came the measured roar of men's voices chanting, 'Feisal, Nasir, Shukri, Urens', in waves which began here, rolled along the squares, through the market down long streets to East gate, round the wall, back up the Meidan; and grew to a wall of shouts around us by the citadel" (2011, Loc. 9441-51). The vividness of the sense of triumph in this passage stands in sharp contrast with the dismay at the imperfection and incompleteness of the Arab 'victory', which is also detectable in Lawrence's grief over Dahoum's death, hence the connection between the two narratives, which appear to converge in the figure of Dahoum (and his subsequent demise).

²²⁸ As implied above, love-related themes of 'failure' and 'disappointment' at the 'impossibility' of an amour can be linked to the medieval theme of 'courtly love', which was incidentally witnessing a critical revival in the nineteenth century, thanks to Gaston Paris and his 1883 study of the romances of the Round Table legends. The theme is typically characterised by a knight's love for a superior, unobtainable married lady. The love is usually celebrated for its chastity, although vague references to lustful yearnings and/or to its carnal consummation may slip in the narrative. In his article on the "meaning of courtly love", Herbert Moller (1960) identifies two paradoxes in texts

However, apart from Dahoum's tragic death, other 'imperfections' make themselves powerfully present in certain parts of Lawrence's narrative in *Seven Pillars*. The full title of the book,²²⁹ *Seven Pillars of Wisdom: A Triumph*, is interesting. The "A Triumph" in the subtitle is significant, for it appears to cast a judgement on the overall achievement. Dawson (1994) argues that Lawrence's publication of his book was partially induced by an urge to rectify the popular image that Lowell Thomas had created for him. In Dawson's words, *Seven Pillars* "can be read as Lawrence's attempt to compose a public identity that he could live with more comfortably, and to elicit recognition of himself as a man more complex than Thomas's adventure hero" (p.196). Indeed, Lawrence's complexity emerges clearly in certain passages in his book. Importantly, however, the book performs an essential task for Lawrence. Towards the beginning of the book, Lawrence asserts, "In this book also, for the last time, I mean to be my own judge of what to say" (1979, p.6).

Yet, some of what Lawrence "say[s]" stands in sharp contrast with the 'triumph' statement in the subtitle. In what follows, I am going to throw light on some of the passages in which Lawrence's narrative emerges less than triumphant. The aim is to further explore the modernist trope in Lawrence's otherwise triumphantly romantic vision and narrative. As we have seen, part of Lawrence's attraction to the Arabs lies in their being a "dogmatic people, despising doubt, our modern crown of thorns" (1979, p.16). Lawrence embraces the Arabs and their habits more than any other British officer. Shedding his khaki British uniform and adopting 'Arab skin' is Lawrence's metaphoric disposal of his "modern crown of thorns". Indeed, his exhilaration while flaunting Feisal's Sharifian garment speaks for itself.

written in this tradition; he writes, "In the classical form this relationship has two seemingly paradoxical aspects which have struck every reader of this literature, but which have never been explained. First, the female love object is, as a rule, the wife of another man; and yet this relationship is celebrated as the source of a higher morality, notwithstanding the prevailing religious and social sanctions of monogamy. Second, the lover is repressed as overwhelmed by an intense yearning for physical and emotional gratification, and yet ideally this yearning should never be allayed by possession in reality" (1960, p.40). Essentially, courtly love thrives to be fulfilled, but does not usually succeed without inflicting undesirable consequences. Lancelot's love for Guinevere in the Arthurian legend, for example, had had disastrous consequences and ended up unfulfilled as Guinevere decides to spend the rest of her life as a nun despite (or because of) Arthur's death. Of course, medieval courtly love is heterosexual in its nature; however, Lawrence appears to render the theme and present it in a subtle homoerotic version. To be sure, I am not suggesting a perfect replication of the tradition in Lawrence's subtle manipulation of theme; however, I aim to highlight a number of passages in *Seven Pillars* where elements of homoerotic 'courtly love' are detectable, albeit in the loose sense of the word. This will be further explored in Chapter Four. Generally speaking, I would like to show how Lawrence's grief and pain at the failure of his endeavour, and ultimately his failure at reuniting with his beloved (who had been waiting for him and for whom Lawrence had set off on this venture in the first place) evokes images of 'courtly love', which were omnipresent in much of Lawrence's favourite literature. The impossibility of Lawrence's love for Dahoum, which is utterly shattered by the latter's death further aligns Lawrence's narrative in *Seven Pillars* with that of chivalric literature, including the strong sense of destiny and doom in the Arthurian legends. Other manifestations of this theme in *Seven Pillars* will be highlighted in Chapter Four, where the theme will also be linked to depictions of nationalist struggle and homoerotic desire in Lawrence's rendition of the heroic and the homoerotic in the Arab camp.

²²⁹ The title of the book comes the Bible: "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars" (Proverbs 9: 1).

Nonetheless, despite his evident 'comfort in his new skin' and the reassurance it bestowed on him, an undeniable strand of scepticism reemerges in his narrative on various occasions.

In a remarkable passage, Lawrence confesses to the imperfection of his masquerade and the functional distortion it seems to have inflicted on him:

In my case, the effort for these years to live in the dress of Arabs, and to imitate their mental foundation, quitted me of my English self, and let me look at the West and its conventions with new eyes: they destroyed it all for me. At the same time I could not sincerely take on the Arab skin: it was affection only. Easily was a man made an infidel, but hardly might he be converted to another faith. I had dropped one form and not taken on the other, and was become like Mohammed's coffin in our legend, with a resultant feeling of intense loneliness in life, and a contempt, not for other men, but for all they do. (1979, p.10)

Suddenly, Lawrence's glorious attire acquires a very different significance that stands in stark contrast with Lowell Thomas's romantic depiction of the perfectly harmonious image of the "blond Bedouin". Indeed, the celebrated seamless hybridity of the "Viking-blood[ed]" "caliph"-like figure is shattered beyond recognition. Lawrence's distortion of his Arabian persona continues with a distinctively modernist flavour; he writes,

Such detachment came at times to a man exhausted by prolonged physical effort and isolation. His body plodded on mechanically, while his reasonable mind left him, and from without looked down critically on him, wondering what that futile lumber did and why. Sometimes these selves would converse in the void; and then madness was very near, as I believe it would be near the man who could see things through the veils at once of two customs, two educations, two environments. (1979, p.10)

Fragmentation of the self, exhaustion (spiritual and physical), isolation, mechanical movement, void and madness are all unmistakably modernist threads in the perfectly bleak image portrayed in the passage above. Indeed, the passage seems reminiscent of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922), a text that is considered by many to be the epitome of literary modernism.²³⁰

Lawrence's original romantic vision continues to be eroded and deconstructed by this reemerging narrative in his text. Significantly, this fragmentation seems to pass on to Lawrence's (otherwise "dogmatic" and uniform) Arab fighters. Like him, they appear to develop a desire for 'dressing-up'; Lawrence observes, "To an Arab an essential part of the triumph of victory was to wear the clothes of an enemy: and next day we saw our force

²³⁰ Period-wise, Lawrence's text was contemporaneous with major modernist works by writers such as T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, Ezra Pound and Virginia Woolf. Although I do not intend to compare Lawrence to such writers, I aim to highlight the modernist elements in his narrative, which seem to typically reflect what Lewis (2007) refers to as "the fragmentary nature of the modern experience" (p.8). The functionality of Lawrence's employment of these narratives is what I am interested in.

transformed (as to the upper half) into a Turkish force, each man in a soldier's tunic: for this was a battalion straight from home, very well found and dressed in new uniforms" (2011, Loc. 4342-44). By doffing their own ('ancient' and romantic) attire and half-dressing in this "new uniform", the Arabs appear to paradoxically mimic Lawrence's (now-imperfect) Anglo-Arab hybridisation and further expose the 'monstrosity' of his own attempt at masquerade. Remarkably, Lawrence appears to regret the 'monstrosity' he created; he writes:

A man who gives himself to be a possession of aliens leads a Yahoo life, having bartered his soul to a brute-master. He is not of them. He may stand against them, persuade himself of a mission, batter and twist them into something which they, of their accord, would not have been. Then he is exploiting his old environment to press them out of theirs. Or, after my model, he may imitate them so well that they spuriously imitate him back again. Then he is giving away his own environment: pretending to be theirs; and pretences are hollow, worthless things. (1979, p.10)

The image is superbly unsettling. Lawrence appears to be admitting to the disturbing contagiousness of the simulacrum-like ramifications of his self-conduct in the desert campaign. By "imitat[ing] him back", the Arabs are effectively deconstructing Lawrence's fantasy for him. By wearing their enemy's "uniform", the Arabs seem to be embracing the very form of monstrous modernity Lawrence had escaped from. Needless to say, the paradox becomes more disturbingly complex when we envisage the floating significance of attire in a scene where Lawrence is dressed as a Sharifian Emir fighting Turks in uniform, whose attire has now been stripped off, to be half-worn by the Arabs.

More disturbing, however, is the destiny of those Turks whose uniform has been seized as a trophy of victory by the Arabs, their (ex-)imperial subjects. Noticeably, Lawrence is disengaged from the jubilant mob; his attention is now focused on the naked bodies of the dead Turkish soldiers. In a strikingly macabre passage, Lawrence describes his attraction to the dead bodies in what appears to be a sentiment of homoerotic necrophilia,

The dead men looked wonderfully beautiful. The night was shining gently down, softening them into new ivory. Turks were white-skinned on their clothed parts, much whiter than the Arabs; and these soldiers had been very young. Close round them lapped the dark wormwood, now heavy with dew, in which the ends of the moonbeams sparkled like sea-spray. The corpses seemed flung so pitifully on the ground, huddled anyhow in low heaps. Surely if straightened they would be comfortable at last. So I put them all in order, one by one, very wearied myself, and longing to be of these quiet ones, not of the restless, noisy, aching mob up the valley, quarrelling over the plunder, boasting of their speed and strength to endure God knew how many toils and pains of this sort; with death, whether we won or lost, waiting to end the history. (2011, Loc. 4344-50)

Gradually, Lawrence's chivalric fantasy turns into a death wish. No longer is he concerned with winning the campaign and completing the enactment of his fantasy. The immature death of the soldiers seems to trigger an emotional response on Lawrence's part that is evident in his semi-erotic attraction to their naked helplessness. Sympathetically or homoerotically, Lawrence is inclined to flee the scene and join the corpses in their envied solitude in order to "end history"; that is, the very history he had started. Significantly, the imagery in Lawrence's depiction of the dead soldiers conforms to the modernist tradition. Lewis (2007) points out the dichotomy between First World War poetry of "older men such as Rudyard Kipling and Henry Newbolt [who] composed patriotic hymns in traditional meters [...]" on the one hand, and "a young group of poets [who] recorded their reactions to the war with bitter irony [...]" (p.110), on the other. "The younger poets", Lewis continues, "brought rats and corpses into English poetry" (p. 110). In his prosaic narrative, Lawrence appears to adhere to a modern trend in the young poets' imagery.

In a letter to Edward Leeds, an archaeologist at Oxford, Lawrence refers to the Arab campaign as a *nightmare*; he writes, "I hope that when the nightmare ends I will wake up and become alive again. This killing and killing of Turks is horrible. When you charge in at the finish and find them all over the place in bits, and still alive many of them, and know that you have done hundreds in the same way before and must do hundreds more if you can" (cited in Barr 2007, p.170). The glory of being "at the mainspring of a nationalist movement" is very much absent from this gory image. Even Lawrence's previously stated confidence of winning the war appears to fade away in these perfectly bleak moments; in another letter Lawrence writes,

It's a kind of foreign stage on which one plays day and night, in fancy dress, in a strange language, with the price of failure on one's head if the part is not well filled ... Whether we are going to win or lose, when we do strike, I cannot ever persuade myself. The whole thing is such a play, and one cannot put conviction into one's day dreams ... Achievement, if it comes, will be a great disillusionment, but not great enough to wake one up. (cited in Barr 2007, p.255-256)

Even Lawrence's royal Meccan garment becomes a mere "fancy dress" devoid of its significance. The passage represents Lawrence's acknowledgment of the disillusionment of his fantasy, which is repeated in another passage in the same letter, "I change my abode every day, and my job every two days, and my language every three days, and still remain always unsatisfied. I hate being in front, and I hate being back and I don't like responsibility, and I don't obey orders. Altogether no good just now. A long quiet like a purge, and then a contemplation and decision of future roads, that is what to look forward to" (cited in Barr 2007, p.256). No longer is Lawrence's renowned ability to slip in and out of different roles a

celebratory matter for him. If anything, it seems to add to the daunting sense of relinquishment that characterises these bleak moments in the campaign.

Nevertheless, this is Lawrence being his “own judge”. In other words, these bleak passages, with their modernist tendencies, appear to reflect Lawrence’s sense of (partial) failure. However, has Lawrence really failed? Has not his romantic/fantastical impulse been behind much of his otherwise largely successful involvement in the first place?²³¹ As pointed out earlier, the spirit of the Arab Revolt managed to cement the feudal relations among the various warring clans of Arabia. Importantly, this unprecedented achievement was also replicated across the great cities of the Levant, whose ancient urban societies had similarly lacked in a sense of regional – let alone pan-Arab – unity. In an article published in the *Arab Bulletin* in 1917, Lawrence observes the shortage of national sentiment in Ottoman Greater Syria; he writes,

²³¹ Importantly, Lawrence is very much aware of this impulse. In a remarkable statement, Lawrence confesses that: “Being a half-poet, I don’t value material things much. Sensation and mind seem to me greater, and the ideal, such a thing as the impulse that took us into Damascus, the only thing worth doing” (cited in James 1996, p.40). Moreover, if we accept that Lawrence’s conduct in the Arab campaign is, partially at least, influenced by and modelled on episodes of chivalric literature, we can then regard his “personal narrative” of the events of the Arab Revolt on similar bases. It would be interesting to compare Lawrence, as the author of *Seven Pillars*, with Sir Thomas Malory, the author of *Le Morte Darthur*. To begin with, both writers based their narratives on existing accounts; while Lawrence’s was historical, Malory’s was legendary and folkloric. In her introduction to a recent edition of Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*, Helen Cooper (pp.vii-xxii, 1998) highlights some of the changes and emphases Malory brought to his translation of the existing collection of medieval French romances. She shows how Malory’s narrative was very much influenced by the political and social conditions of English society in the fifteenth century (p.xi). She also points out the dichotomy between Malory’s own conduct in life and the values he championed in *Le Morte*. It is worth mentioning that Sir Thomas Malory completed his work between 1469-1470 while serving time in prison, to which he had returned many times in his life (p.x). Malory’s criminal behaviour is at odds with the chivalric conduct of the Knights of the Round Table and what they aspire to. Yet Cooper argues that this is precisely why Malory produced a book whose emphasis lay on accentuating ideal values that no longer existed in his own society; she writes, “Chivalric orders, however, were founded in order to set standards of aspirations in a world that was less than ideal” (p.xi). Cooper points out a few differences in emphasis on certain tropes in the original French sources and Malory’s choice to shift such emphases to other aspects of the narrative in such a way as to provide a different cause and effect to a particular event in the saga. As Cooper argues, “All episodes are present in the French sources, but Malory’s change of emphasis amounts to an ethical restructuring of the whole history of Arthur” (p.xii). An interesting example of this shift of emphasis is Malory’s depiction of love and its impact on the fellowship of the Knights, which, as Cooper argues, differs significantly from the sinfulness with which it was characterised in the original French sources. This theme will be revisited in the next chapter where it will be juxtaposed with Lawrence’s own portrayal of ‘homoerotic romance’ in the Arab camp on the one hand, and ‘sodomy’ in Turkish camp, on the other. What I would like to draw on for the time being is the extent to which Lawrence and Malory are, as authors, comparable in terms of reproducing existing narratives while falling short of living up to the expectations of their protagonists. Lawrence, as the author (and narrator) of *Seven Pillars*, aspired to many ‘noble’ causes; however, like Malory, he fell short of achieving all of his objectives. Surely, the two authors are very different; nonetheless, it would be interesting to dwell on connections that would link Lawrence, the fantasist, to one of his favourite authors – not merely the fictional plot of his fantasies. Relevant to this is Lawrence’s aforementioned subtitle, “*A Triumph*” in the main title of the book. Cooper argues that Malory’s insertion of “*Le Morte*” in the title of his book sheds light on the tragic death of Arthur and brings it to the foreground of the grand narrative of the book: “That Malory gives his whole work the title of the *Morte Darthur*, the death of Arthur, insists that this too is a story in which things go irrecoverably wrong” (p.ix). Likewise, Lawrence’s “*A Triumph*” can be read similarly, albeit the complexities of this “triumph” and its evident vacillation between the complete and the incomplete endow its very insertion (as a subtitle) with a sense of irony, typical in Lawrence’s narrative, as we have seen so far.

Syria and Syrian are foreign words. Unless he had learnt English or French, the inhabitant of these parts has no word to describe all his country. Syria in Turkish (the word exists not in Arabic) is the province of Damascus. Sham in Arabic is the town of Damascus. An Aleppine always calls himself an Aleppine, a Beirut a Beirut, and so down to the smallest villages. This verbal poverty indicates a political condition. There is no national feeling. (cited in Barr 2007, p.136)

The reality of the achievement of the Arab Revolt is not to be disregarded.²³² After all, Lawrence was indeed at the heart of the “mainspring of a national movement” from *within*, so to speak.

Furthermore, despite the metaphorical significance of Dahoum’s death, Lawrence’s legacy and homo-social (if not homoerotic) image continued to live on among Arab men even after his death in 1935. As Hogarth once put it, “Lawrence was an Arab: a street Arab” (cited in Garnett, p.16). So apart from Dahoum who, using the pronoun ‘we’, declared the Arabs’ universal love for Lawrence, Sheikh Hamoudi of Aleppo, who knew and worked with Lawrence,²³³ would also show a remarkable reaction upon hearing of his death. Garnett explains how the Sheikh “strode up and down a stone-flagged hall in Aleppo, exclaiming in his grief:”

Oh! If only he had died in battle! I have lost my son, but I do not grieve for him as I do for Lawrence ... I am counted brave, the bravest of my tribe; my heart is iron, but his was steel. A man whose hand was never closed, but open. Tell them ... tell them in England what I say. Of manhood the man, in freedom free; a mind without equal; I can see no flaw in him. (cited in Garnett, p.11)

Even the Aleppine Sheikh, whose country had been directly impacted by the eventual implementation of the Sykes-Picot Agreement and all the political disillusionment that ensued since, did not see in Lawrence, the British imperial agent, any “flaw”.

After all, Lawrence was no ordinary imperial figure. As we have seen, the way in which he interacted with the Arabs was exceptional in every sense. The difference in his conduct is even greater when contrasted with that of other contemporary imperial figures. Upon arriving in ‘liberated’ Damascus, the French General, Henri Gouraud, reportedly stood by Saladin’s

²³² Of course, it must be noted that Lawrence remains largely a contributor – not an instigator – to the military effort of the Arab nationalist movement. As we will see in the next chapter, political Arab awareness had been in the making since the nineteenth century. As James puts it, “Lawrence was the chance witness to a society in its last days” (pp.59-60). Nonetheless, this chance encounter seems to have placed quite centrally in the whole affair. In addition, Lawrence’s observations about the lack of unity in Syria will gain further significance when juxtaposed with those of George Antonius in his study (1945) of the beginnings of anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism. As we will see in the next chapter, Antonius’s remarks on the lack of nationalist sentiment in the Levant bear resonance with Lawrence’s.

²³³ Sheikh, or Hoja, Hamoudi was the foreman at the digging site in Karkamis. When Lawrence was seriously ill with dysentery, toothache and fever in 1911, the sheikh cared for him and nursed him back to life (Garnett, p.14). According to Garnett, “it is possible that [Lawrence] would have died” had it not been for the Sheikh’s care (p.14).

tomb and famously announced, “*Nous revoilà, Saladin*” (cited in Barr 2007, p.315). Gouraud’s act reveals the historical roots of France’s imperialist ambitions in Syria that date back to the Crusades. As indicated earlier, Lawrence was conscious of these ambitions, hence his effort to reach Damascus first. It is interesting, however, to compare Gouraud’s action with Lawrence’s upon the latter’s earlier arrival in the city.

Approaching the same tomb, Lawrence detached the gold wreath, which the German Kaiser had laid in 1898 upon his historic visit to the city. As we have seen, the wreath was meant to symbolise the growing friendship between the Germans and the Ottoman Empire, the last Caliphate. With the detached wreath, Lawrence left a note, “Removed by me, as Saladin no longer required it” (cited in Barr, p.294). Although Lawrence’s act may be read in multiple ways, it is tempting to consider its metaphorical significance in relation to what Saladin meant for the Crusades. By detaching the controversial wreath, Lawrence was removing the ‘unwanted’ European (Christian) ‘honour’ that had been forcibly bestowed on the tomb (of the great Muslim ‘Saracen’ leader) as a token of modern-time friendship. The removal of the wreath, which coincides with the European Powers’ deployment (neo-Crusade?) in the region, seems to pronounce the end of the *false* Christian-Muslim (short-lived) partnership.

If Lawrence’s interventionist interaction with the tableau of the ‘Unchanging East’ does not quite manage to produce the desired effect, he may as well sign off with a final attempt at restoring a sense of ‘classical conventionality’, albeit metaphorically. In other words, by removing the imposed wreath, Lawrence was deconstructing the last symbol of modern hybridity. By so doing, Lawrence was *unmasking* the tomb of the great Saracen leader, an unmistakable landmark of original ‘uncorrupted’ Muslim medieval glory. Interestingly, Lawrence gave the wreath to the Imperial War Museum in London, where it can still be seen today (Barr, p.294). Like the artefacts he shipped home from Karkamis and other Syrian ancient sites, the wreath, too, becomes Lawrence’s last artefact from the Levant, a (hybrid?) trophy of war, as it were.

Upon realising the inevitability of the ensuing change and conflict that were to befall the East, Lawrence leaves an interesting note in his campaign notebook shortly before leaving Damascus: “In Damascus when prayer silence came, I knew I was worn tool lying in darkness under bench, rejected for ever by the master” (cited in Barr, p.297). As regards Lawrence’s final take on the ‘un-changeability’ of the East, it can be evidently read in the amusing title of his 1920 essay, “The Changing East”. In the essay, which was published aptly in *The Round*

Table, Lawrence wrote, “A picture-writer once coined a phrase, ‘The Unchanging East,’ and Time has turned round and taken revenge upon him. The East is to-day the place of change – of changes so great and swift that in comparison with it our Europe is standing still” (cited in A.W. Lawrence 1939, p.71). Whether the “picture-writer” is Lawrence’s allusion to himself may be a matter of speculation;²³⁴ however, the passage is a clear – perhaps ironical – acknowledgement of the reality of the change in the East.

If the Arab East’s political change were not to Lawrence’s liking, he would probably be even more dismayed to realise that further cultural and literary change was simultaneously taking place. In the next chapter, I am going to shed light on the ideological background to anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism and its intrinsic relation to certain changes in Arab literary traditions around the turn of the century. As already indicated in Chapter One, the nineteenth century was the “age of transformation” in the Arab world. I would like to examine the relationship between the pro-European epistemological narratives in the Arab *Nahda* and the developments taking place on the literary and intellectual scene. The aim is to analyse the disappearance of *ghazal al-mudhakkar*, a centuries-old subgenre of homoerotic Arabic poetry that idealises male beauty. This will be done in the backdrop of an analytical review of Lawrence’s homoerotic passages in *Seven Pillars*. By so doing, I aim to highlight the irony and paradox embedded in Lawrence’s (and Burton’s) reproductions of narratives of sexual difference at a time when constructions of sexual morality in Arab culture and literature were being shaken and remodelled on forms of likeness to their European (Victorian) counterparts.

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²³⁴ One of Lawrence’s important tools in his 1909 epistemological sojourn in the Levant was a camera and tripod that he used to photograph the Crusaders’ citadels (James, p.43).

Chapter Four:

The Homoerotic and the Heroic: Two Perspectives

The Arab *Nahda*:²³⁵ a cultural background to Arab nationalism

The master-key of opinion lay in the common language: where also, lay the key of imagination. [...] Patriotism, ordinarily of soil or race, was warped to a language. (Lawrence 2011, Loc. 4751-59)

The emphasis on Arabic as an eloquent language embodied in literature, history, science and poetry went hand in hand with the rediscovery of the Arabs as an ethnic community in the possession of cherished ideals and valid values. (Choueiri 2005, p.69)

Although it did not manage to achieve full independence for the Arabs, the Arab Revolt can largely be seen as the culmination of the various ideological narratives of Arab nationalism. Despite the de-facto Islamic element that instigated the Revolt in Arabia in the first place,²³⁶ the Revolt also embodied the spirit of the wider, more secular aspirations of Arabism. We have had a glimpse of this spirit in the previous chapter. Abd el Kerim's statement,²³⁷ "We are no longer Arabs but a People", sums up much of it and highlights the Arab cultural basis of this emerging sense of belonging. Effectively, the centuries-old Islamic bond between the Arabs and the Turks was being deconstructed and replaced by a linguistic-based cultural one, whereby Islam would still play a role, albeit differently. Nonetheless, as Choueiri (2005) points out, nationalism (in general) "is a process rather than an event" (p.56). In the particular case of Arab nationalism, this process had started earlier in the nineteenth century with a growing "consciousness of the difference between Turks and Arabs" (Hourani 2009, p.262). However, as Hourani explains, "explicit Arab nationalism, as a movement with political aims and importance, did not emerge until towards the end of the nineteenth century" (p.262). As we have seen, the timing of the political momentum of the movement, which coincided with the modern reshuffling of imperial power relations, proved vital for enlisting Anglo-French support for the Arab cause. In Choueiri's words, "Arab nationalism is [...] a child of the modern world" for "it constitutes a definite break with the past" (p.56).

In this chapter, I am going to shed light on the cultural background of Arab nationalism and point out the Arabs' emphasis on the importance of their language and literary heritage in rebuilding and restoring their 'past glory'. As shown in Chapter One, the nineteenth century witnessed the Arabs' modern epistemological encounter with Europe, whose intellectual and cultural achievement would have a great impact on the Arabs' rediscovery of their own

²³⁵ In this chapter, I use the word '*Nahda*', Arabic for 'renaissance', interchangeably with the expression, 'cultural Arabism'; both of which refer to the cultural-literary strand within the rise of Arab nationalism in the nineteenth century.

²³⁶ That is, Sharif Hussein's claim over the Caliphate.

²³⁷ Abd el Kerim was a leader of the Juhaynah, one of the tribes that joined the Arab Revolt effort. As we will see later in this chapter, much of Lawrence's own account on the spirit of Arabism is reflected in the critique of the movement's historians.

cultural and literary heritage. I would like to show how this rediscovery resulted in reconstructing concepts of literary sexual morality in Arabic literature by remodelling these constructions on European (Victorian) models, thanks to the Arabs' modern encounter with Orientalist discourse. The chapter will also expose aspects of Lawrence's own take on Arab nationalism. Indeed, Lawrence appears to have had an understanding of the spirit of Arab nationalism and its cultural background. However, his depiction of Arabian homoeroticism in the desert campaign contradicts the literary agenda of cultural Arab nationalism. The latter, as we will see, is responsible for the disappearance of the subgenre of *ghazal al-mudhakkar* (or male-love) poetry from Arabic literature at the turn of the century. The aim is to highlight the great irony evident in the disparity between Burton and Lawrence's depiction of Arab male-to-male sexuality in Orientalist discourse and the cultural agenda of Arab nationalism.

To begin with, the Arabic language proved to be the point of convergence where the nationalist narratives of Arabic-speaking intellectuals would intersect. Despite their various agendas, the linguistic focus of these intellectuals would fuse their effort in reviving the Arabs' 'glorious' past and emphasise the role of the Arabic language and literature in its cultural achievement. From those calling for the restoration of the Caliphate to Arab hands to those demanding modern (Western-style) democratic reform and political rights, Islamist and secular intellectuals alike united in demanding a sense of recognition of Arab identity within Ottoman society. Hourani highlights the potentially problematic nature of this demand for the Muslim Arabs who, despite accepting the Sultan as ruler, did not regard him as a legitimate Caliph (p.266).²³⁸ The Muslim Arabs, Hourani continues, "had learned from their ancestors what the true doctrine of the caliphate was, and it was indeed essentially connected with their pride in what the Arabs had done for Islam" (p.266). As we have seen, at the heart of the Arab Revolt was the aim to restore the Caliphate from the Turkish Sultan-Caliph to Sharif Hussein, the 'true' Arab descendent of the Prophet. As shown in the previous chapter and implied in his quote above, Lawrence was aware of the importance of the Arabic language as well as the role of Islam in nourishing the Arab national movement. I shall return to Lawrence's awareness of these narratives after I have drawn on a quick overview of their historical formation.

²³⁸ As we have seen in the previous chapter, this was quickly spotted by Ronald Storrs, the British High Commissioner in Cairo, who was an "early enthusiast" for supporting Sharif Hussein in his quest to seize the Caliphate (Barr 2007, p.xv). Of course, this was a strategic move on the part of the British who had rightly anticipated the Sultan's call for Jihad upon the beginning of the war in 1914. Barr cites the "enticing message" that Lord Kitchener, Britain's Secretary of State for War, had dispatched to Sharif Hussein via Storrs: "Till now we have defended and befriended Islam in the person of the Turks: henceforward it shall be in that of the noble Arab. It may be that an Arab of true race will assume the Caliphate at Mecca or Medina, and so good may come by the help of God out of all the evil which is now occurring" (p.11).

Choueiri recognises three main groups that had shaped the emergence of cultural Arabism (p.66).²³⁹ The first is the class of the *Ulama*, or Arab religious scholars,²⁴⁰ who saw themselves as the “custodians of Arab culture and values” (p.66). Interestingly, their ideas were imbued with the teachings of the medieval Hanbali jurist, Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya (1263-1328),²⁴¹ who stressed the importance of the role of the *Ulama* as “the legal and natural defenders of the community, following the demise of the [Arab] Caliphate” (p.66). For Ibn Taymiyya, the *Ulama* would become “the direct inheritors of the Prophet and the authentic representatives of their communities in the face of foreign dynasties and non-Arab ruling families” (p.67). The simple justification for this emphasis on the Arab element lies in the fact that extensive knowledge of the Arabic language is a quintessential prerequisite for the study of Islamic law and its application (p.67). This, Choueiri shows, meant the ability to ascertain “the circumstances which occasioned particular injunctions and prescriptions in the Qur’an” – an essential prerequisite for *ijtihad*, or personal reasoning, in Islamic Shari’a (p.67). In addition, knowledge of “Arabic grammar, literature, and history formed necessary auxiliary sciences in preparing oneself for guiding one’s community or giving sound advice to the ruler of the day” (p.67). In this light, the Arabs’ claim over the Caliphate could also be sustained on theological and intellectual grounds.

More importantly, the perceived illegitimacy of the (non-Arab) Ottoman Caliphate would give the Arabs further ground to criticise the Turks for the ‘degeneration’ that had befallen the Muslim *umma*, or nation, under their rule. In a direct attack on Ottoman despotism, the Aleppine Abd al-Rahman al-Kawakbi (1849-1903), a religious scholar and an important member of the Muslim intelligentsia (Choueiri p.83), links the Turkish (non-Arab) elements in the Caliphate to the “decay of Islam” (Hourani, p.272). In *The Characteristics of Tyranny* (1900) among other works, al-Kawakbi openly blames the Turkish rule for the “alien spirit” of “illegal innovation”, which resulted in “the denial of the rights of reason and the failure to distinguish what is essential from what is not” (p.272). As Hourani shows, these ideas had already been echoed by other similar-minded Arab intellectuals of the day;²⁴² however, al-Kawakbi placed “greater emphasis” on the Ottomans’ corruption and contrasted it with what

²³⁹ As we will see, these groups include the religious Muslim scholars, the *Ulama*, the secular (mainly Christian) Syro-Lebanese intelligentsia as well as the group of urban notables and landowners, who would later become the leaders of political Arabism (Choueiri, pp.66-68). However, since my research is concerned with the cultural formation of Arabism, the third group’s later political role will not be touched upon here. See Philip Khouri’s *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism* (1983) for a detailed account of the notables’ role in political Arabism.

²⁴⁰ Some of these scholars claimed direct descent from the Prophet (Choueiri, p.66).

²⁴¹ The Hanbali School of Jurisprudence is one of the schools of *Fiqh*, or religious law, within Sunni Islam. The Hanbali School is conservative in its interpretation of theology.

²⁴² These include Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh (Hourani, p.272). See Hourani (pp.103-160) for more details on each scholar’s contribution to cultural Arabism.

“the true Islamic State” had originally been. Al-Kawakbi, who was a “strong opponent of Sultan Abdulhamid” (Hourani, p.271), argued that

Despotic rulers have supported false religion, but their evil doing is not confined to that; despotism as such corrupts the whole of society. The despotic State [...] encroaches on the rights of its citizens, keeps them ignorant to keep them passive, [...] it distorts the moral structure of the individual, destroying courage, integrity, the sense of belonging, both religious and national. (Hourani, p.272)

“To free Islam from these evils”, al-Kawakbi contends,

there must be a reform of the law, the creation of a modern and unified system of law by the use of *ijtihad*; there must be proper religious education; but something else is necessary as well – a shift in the balance of power inside the *umma*, from the Turks back to the Arabs. Only the Arabs can save Islam from decay: because of the central position of the Arabian Peninsula in the *umma* and the Arabic language in Islamic thought, but also for other reasons – Arabian Islam is comparatively free from modern corruptions, and the Bedouin are free from the moral decay and passivity of despotism. The centre of gravity must move back to Arabia: there should be an Arabian caliph of the line of Quraysh, elected by representatives of the *umma*; he should have religious authority throughout the Muslim world, and be assisted in the exercise of it by a consultative council nominated by the Muslim rulers; he should have temporal authority in the Hejaz, assisted by a local council. (Hourani, p.273)

Of course, the emphasis on the centrality of the Arab element in Islam is reminiscent of Ibn Taymiyya’s thought,²⁴³ whose “rediscovery in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries took place against the background of growing discontent with Ottoman authority” (Choueiri, p.74). From a religious point of view, the Sunni Arabs’ strict interpretation of Ibn Taymiyya’s Hanbilism would further problematize the Ottoman “lax attitude towards Sufi orders” (p.74), which is also detectable in al-Kawakbi’s narrative above.

However, the call for recasting Islam in its ‘original’ Arab form was also meant to liberate it from what was perceived as the ‘foreign’ origin of its current corruption and degeneration, theological and otherwise. Choueiri shows how “signs of decline in science and industry, and traditional accretions of mystical beliefs, were considered the result of a process of adulteration, set in motion by the ascendancy of non-Arab ethnicities” (p.73). Nonetheless, recasting Islam in its “pure Arab origins” was to be achieved in a “modern framework of rational attitudes to political and cultural problems” (p.73). In Choueiri’s words, “the return to

²⁴³ It must be noted that Ibn Taymiyya’s original purpose had been purely religious and that faith piety for him constituted the core of Islam, irrespective of race or ethnicity (Choueiri, p.73). Nonetheless, like his fellow *Ulama*, Ibn Taymiyya recognized that Muslims consisted of Arabs and non-Arabs, or “*arab wa ajam*” (Choueiri, p.73), who should, all the same, aim to speak Arabic “be it at home, work or school” (p.74). For him, “the Arabic tongue is the symbol of Islam and its adherents, and language is one of the most distinguishing symbols of nations” (Ibn Taymiyya, cited in Choueiri, p.74).

the practices and simple creed of the early Arab ancestors was [...] a modernist attempt to relaunch Islam on a new course" (p.73).

Yet, despite the religious roots of this call to reinstate the Arabs' role in Islam and the governance of their *umma*, there had been an emphasis on the 'ethnic' Arab element. Egyptian translator and religious scholar, Rifa'a al-Tahtawi (1801-73), who, as we saw in Chapter One, wrote comparatively of European and Islamic civilisations,²⁴⁴ emphasised the ethnic element in the Arabs' cultural achievement. The religious scholar, who claimed descent from the Prophet Muhammad, had repeatedly stressed the virtues of the Arabs, which were "common to pagan, Christian and Jewish Arabs long before the advent of Islam" (Choueiri, p.70). As Choueiri points out, al-Tahtawi's "pride in the Arabs was thus premised on ethnic qualities that were strengthened by the new religion as conveyed in the Qur'an" (p.70). It is significant that such universal praise came from a member of the *Ulama* class. In what follows, I am going to highlight the equally important role of the Christian intelligentsia in propagating awareness of the Arabs' historical cultural and literary achievement.

As we have seen in Chapter Two, Khalil Sarkis, with his expurgated version of *The Arabian Nights* was an example of the Levant's Christian contribution to the emerging discourse of cultural Arab *Nahda*, or renaissance. Sarkis's dedication to spreading knowledge by printing Arabic classics as well as modern works and translations exposes the linguistic and literary emphasis of his approach.²⁴⁵ However, he was typical of his class; that is, the predominantly Christian intelligentsia in Syria and Lebanon who took more of a secular approach. From forming literary associations, publishing newspapers to founding schools and cultural institutes, their model had been influenced by the European educational institutions (Choueiri, p.68) with which they had close connections, thanks to the Western missions' activity in the Levant at the time.²⁴⁶ An allusion to these missions has already been made in the

²⁴⁴ Al-Tahtawi's comparative analysis of Euro-Arab sexual morality in his book will be revisited later in his chapter.

²⁴⁵ As noted in Chapter Two, Sarkis printed both classic as well as modern Arab works (Ayalon 2008, p.566). Among the titles of the old Arab heritage book he printed are: "*Alf Layla wa-Layla; Kalila wa-Dimna*; the epics of *Antara bin Shaddad, Sayf bin Dhi Yazan, and Bani Hilal*; Hariri's *Maqamat*; al-Suyuti's *Miftah al-Ulum*; and Ibn Khaldun's *Muqaddima*" (p.566). As for the modern works, original and translated, Sarkis's strategy was to make the books as affordable as possible; the genres he printed include: "poetry collections (*diwans*); novels and stories; books on language, history, and philosophy; and school texts" (p.566).

²⁴⁶ In *A History of the Arab Peoples* (2005), Hourani shows the diversity of these missions, which operated mainly in Lebanon and Syria (p.302). These missions provided educational institutions for the Christians and sometimes even the Muslims (p.303). The two main competitors who financed this educational effort were the French, who catered for the Catholics, and the Americans, who created and catered for a "small Protestant community" (p.303). Among the notable achievements of the Catholic missionary work is the Université St-Joseph, which was founded by the Jesuits in Beirut in 1875 (p.303). The most important outcome of the American Protestant educational effort in the region was the Syrian Protestant College in Beirut, which was founded in 1866. This was later to become the American University of Beirut (p.303). In addition, the Russian influence was manifested in the schools built by the

previous chapter. Indeed, we have seen how Lawrence did not approve of their modernising role and foreign influence in the region.

Nonetheless, these missions are to be credited for much of the Levantine Christians' reignited interest in their linguistic and literary cultural heritage. As George Antonius (1945) puts it, the French and American Western missionaries were the "foster-parents of Arab resurrection" (p.35). For the intelligentsia used its European-style education to reflect on its own culture, rediscover it and reproduce it in a modern form. This rediscovered heritage would be celebrated as a powerful basis of the intelligentsia's growing sense of national pride. Despite the Western-Christian nature of its epistemological approach, its inclinations and objectives remained, like its Islamist counterpart, pro-Arab, culturally and politically. More importantly, members of the Christian intelligentsia would also contribute to the propagation of the importance of the Arabic language. Antonius argues that the Arabic language had generally deteriorated in Greater Syria under the Ottomans, thanks to the "decay" in Arab power (p.39). However, this deterioration seems to have affected the Christians more than the Muslims, for the latter's access to the Quran as well as the "profoundly humanistic value of [...] Islamic sciences" helped lessen the damaging impact (p.39). What the Christian intelligentsia had done though was to bridge the gaps of linguistic eloquence between the two communities in Greater Syria (pp.39-47).

Citing two prominent Lebanese pro-Arabist Christian scholars, Nasif Yazeji (1800-71) and Butrus Bustani (1819-83), Antonius shows how their efforts in reviving Arab culture,²⁴⁷ language and literature created a new spirit of cultural Arabism, which, despite the origin of its Western-missionary sponsorship, managed to reach and unite Arabic-speaking Syrians from all creeds (pp.42-54). He cites the *Syrian Scientific Society* (founded in 1857) as the first society of

Imperial Russian Orthodox Palestine Society for members of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Also, see Antonius (1945, pp.35-44) for a detailed account of the Western missions in the Levant.

²⁴⁷ The two scholars were commissioned by American missionaries to "compose manuals on a variety of subjects for the use of schools" (Antonius, p.42). This commission came after American Press had been able to undertake a program of Arabic printing to address the shortage of Arabic books, thanks to the efforts of the American missionary, Eli Smith (pp.41-42). The missionary would later approach Bustani and ask for his assistance in producing a new Arabic translation of the Bible (p.48). Bustani, who learnt many languages and applied himself to learning, was also to contribute to the advancement of learning in Arabic (pp.48-49). Among his important publications are the *Circumference of the Ocean* (1870), a two-volume dictionary of Arabic, and an eleven-volume Arabic encyclopedia, *Dairat al-Ma'aref*, which was finished after his death by two members of his family (p.49). The encyclopedia was original in that it combined European sources with Arabic literary and historical ones; it also contained some of Bustani's own research (p.49). As for Yazeji, he channeled all of his energies into Arabic, which was the only language he spoke (p.47). However, his importance lies in his focus on the language as a cross-sectarian medium on which the Arabs' "fraternal future" could lay its "foundations" (p.47). He advocated a revival of old Arabic literature and preached to Christians and Muslims at a time when "religious fanaticism was still violent" (p.47).

its kind in the Arab world,²⁴⁸ whereby its multi-creed members (Christians of all sects, Muslims and Druze) rose to 150 (1945, p.53). Antonius writes,

For the first time, probably in the history of Syria, certainly for the first time in the 350 years of the Ottoman domination, a common ideal had brought the warring creeds together and united them in an active partnership for a common end. An interest in the progress of the country as a national unit was now their incentive, a pride in the Arab inheritance their bond. The foundation of the society was the first outward manifestation of a collective national consciousness, and its importance in a history is that it was the cradle of a new political movement. (1945, p.54)

Significantly, the “first cry” of the “the Arab national movement” may have been “uttered” at a secret meeting of this society (Antonius, p.54). As Antonius points out, what had started off as a “duel” for influence between the competing French and American missions ended up setting “in train a revival of the Arabic language and, with it, a movement of ideas which, in a short lifetime, was to leap from literature to politics” (p.37).

And so it did. For the “first cry” of “the Arab national movement” had indeed been “uttered” in the form of a patriotic poem, “an ode to patriotism”, composed by Ibrahim Yazeji, one of Nasif’s sons (p.54). The poem itself

sang of the achievements of the Arab race, of the glories of Arabic literature, and of the future that the Arabs might fashion for themselves by going to their own past for inspiration. It denounced the evils of sectarian dissensions, heaped abuse on the misgovernment to which the country was a prey, and called upon the Syrians to band together and shake off their Turkish yoke. (p.54)

In this light, the Christian-based narrative of cultural Arabism seems to meet its Muslim counterpart in its equal emphasis on the importance of the Arabs’ cultural heritage, linguistic and literary. In other words, it was this revivalist approach to Arab culture that unified Arabism’s Muslim and Christian disciples. Of this new bond, Antonius explains how later “a band of young thinkers” set off “an agitation for the liberation of their country from Turkish rule” (1945, p.60). These thinkers were

the pupils of Yazeji and Bustani, the first generation to have been nurtured on the recovered cultural inheritance; and, in contemplation of its beauty, their minds had drawn closer to the Arab spirit and felt the warmth of its passion for freedom. The seed of patriotism was sown, and a movement came into being whose inspiration was Arab and whose ideals were national instead of sectarian. (p.60)

²⁴⁸ The uniqueness of this society lies in its being an all-Arab multi-sectarian one. Of course, other societies had existed before, but they had been associated with the Western missions and often included foreign (European or American) members. Two examples are the *Society of Arts and Sciences*, founded in 1847, which was linked with the American Mission in Beirut (p.51), and the Jesuit-sponsored *Oriental Society*, founded in 1850, which had a French connection (pp.52-53).

Indeed, we have already seen emergence of this non-sectarian, linguistic-based Arab unity being echoed in Muslim scholars' narratives. The importance of the Arabic language is not to be underestimated. Hourani (2009) shows how, between 1879-90, a few young Christians of Bustani's circle "plastered Beirut with placards calling on the people of Syria to unite, and asking for the autonomy of Syria in union with Lebanon, the recognition of Arabic as an official language, and the removal of restrictions on expression and knowledge" (p.274). It was also in this period when Modern Standard Arabic was born and took its final shape, thanks to the "combined" efforts of Syrian and Egyptian writers (Choueiri, p.69). And just as al-Kawakbi openly blamed the Turks for the *umma's* degeneration and called upon the Arabs to save the nation from the Turks' "evils", Négib Azoury, a Christian Syrian intellectual, claimed that the Turks had "ruined the Arabs. [...] It was not, he believed, possible to hope that the empire would reform itself and grant the Arabs a better position. [...] Independence, then, was the only way out" (Hourani, pp.278-79). This view would later be echoed by the Arab secret societies that proliferated in the first two decades of the twentieth century.²⁴⁹ On the eve of the First World War, these societies' views can be summed up as follows, "The Arabs must break away, by violence if necessary, and all Arabs must help in this: 'Muslim Arabs, this despotic State is not a Muslim State. Arab Christians and Jews, unite with your Muslim brothers'" (Hourani, p.285).

Choueiri sums up the Arabs' non-sectarian nationalist collaboration and shows how, despite their various narratives and impulses, all the groups that shaped the discourse of cultural Arabism "adopted a twin-track policy" (p.68). On the one hand, they praised "Arab historical achievement [...] demonstrating the compatibility of Arab cultural values, once purified and reinterpreted, with modern institutions" (p.68). Importantly, however, the "journey of rediscovery entailed attaching central importance to the Arabic language as a medium of communication, and Arab ethnicity vouchsafed by a glorious golden age, to resume its role in history" (p.68). To be sure, dwelling on the cultural background to Arab nationalism is an area of research on its own. My aim has been to provide an overview of the narratives that shaped up the Arabs' national awareness on the eve of modernity. To be precise, it is the linguistic and literary point of convergence of these narratives that I have aimed to focus on.

Needless to say, the political events that led to the Arab Revolt are far more complex than can be related here. The Arabs' inability to incite satisfactory Ottoman reforms, even

²⁴⁹ These societies included, the Qahtaniyya, al-Fatat and al-Ahd Hourani (p.285). See Hourani (pp.260-223) for details. As we shall see, the al-Fatat Society will hold a special significance for the development of the Arab Revolt. Prince Feisal joined it in 1915 (Choueiri, p.82).

after the revolution of the Young Turks in 1908,²⁵⁰ would eventually lead to the articulation of the concept of pan-Arabism at the Arab Congress in Paris in 1913 (Choueiri, p.91).²⁵¹ In short, the Arabs' dismay at the Ottomans' policies of turkification and centralisation – clear obstacles in the way of Arab aspirations for cultural recognition – was to culminate in unifying their various nationalist narratives in the Arab Revolt in 1916 (Choueiri, p.91). In fact, as early as 1911, deputy leaders of Arab secret societies and parties had already been in contact with Sharif Hussein swearing allegiance to his cause and showing their readiness “to rise” with him should he “wish to break the yoke that weighs on them” (Hourani, p.284). As shown in the previous chapter, the Revolt was also the fruition of the brief Euro-Arab alliance in their mutual interest to depose the Ottoman Empire.

To sum up, the various narratives of cultural Arabism converged in their emphasis on the Arabs' past achievement. Nonetheless, as Choueiri points out, this rediscovery of a “golden age” in “Arabic civilization” was “coupled with an earnest desire to acquire knowledge of the modern European world” (p.66). This combination, Choueiri argues, was “the hallmark of this cultural movement” (p.66). From his side, Hourani notes that the “atmosphere” at the Arab Congress in Paris was “an atmosphere of westernization: we Arabs, the speakers declared, want to reform the empire because we want to participate in modern civilization, and we look to Europe for help” (p.283). Indeed, we have seen evidence of the Arabs' pro-European epistemological quest in Chapter One. The translation movement was to have a great impact on the Arabs' own cultural and literary production. As indicated in the previous chapters,

²⁵⁰ The Young Turks, a group of army officers, founded a secret revolutionary society (Hourani 2009, p.280). They took over power from Sultan Abdulhamid and compelled him to restore the constitution (p.280). They formed the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which ruled the empire (p.280). Their reformist and secularist approach appealed to many of the non-Turkish subjects of the Ottoman Empire who supported them; this included members of the Arab intelligentsia. Indeed, the period 1908-1914 witnessed relative freedom of speech and new Arabic newspapers appeared in Beirut and Baghdad (p.280). However, disputes were soon to arise. As Hourani sums it up, “[T]he Young Turks wanted constitutional government, which implied freedom and equality for all elements in the empire; but they also wanted to preserve the empire as a unit, and strengthen it against pressure from outside, and this implied centralised government and the predominance of the Turkish Muslim element over the rest” (2009, p.280). These aims would prove contradictory to the ambitions of Arab nationalists; moreover, further disputes were to emerge within the Young Turks as to the type of Ottoman nationalism their rule implied (p.281). Eventually, the view that Ottoman nationalism can only be achieved by having one language and one loyalty was to prevail. As Hourani puts it, “The only effective nationalism was that which was rooted in some objective unity such as language or race, and thus Ottoman nationalism gradually turned into Turkish nationalism” (p.281). See Hourani (pp.280-282) for further details.

²⁵¹ The Congress was organised by the Ottoman Administrative Decentralisation Party in Beirut as well as the secret al-Fatat Society (Choueiri, p.91). The al-Fatat Society is seen as probably the most important secret society in the Arab world of the time (Choueiri, p.81). It was formally established in Paris in 1911 by two Syrian students (p.81). It moved its headquarters to Beirut after the Arab Congress in 1913. The society was to move its headquarters to Damascus upon the Ottoman Empire's entry into the First World War (p.82). Prince Feisal was successfully recruited as a member upon his visit to the city in 1915. Although the Society initially aimed to support the Ottomans in the war for fears of “European designs” in “Arab Asia”, the CUP's repressive policies persuaded them otherwise (p.82). For Jamal Pasha, Ottoman representative of the CUP in Syria, executed the first batch of what came to be known as the ‘Arab Martyrs’, a group of Arab nationalists, on 21 August 1915 (p.82). This act, among many others, convinced the al-Fatat to work with Sharif Hussein for Arab independence (p.82).

evidence of this impact was manifest in the change of the Arabs' cultural attitudes towards literary representation of sexual morality. However, before I explore the intricacies of this impact on Arabic literature, I would like first to expose Lawrence's own views on Arab nationalism and highlight the extent to which he seems to have had an understanding of the Arab cause and its cultural background. The aim is to juxtapose these findings with his portrayal of Arab sexuality, which I will be analysing at the end of the chapter.

Lawrence and "the conjunction of Semites"

As we have seen in the previous chapter, elements of Lawrence's intrinsic understanding of the nature of the Arab Revolt are evident in his narrative and the testimonies of his fellow British officers. Pierce Joyce admits,²⁵² "We can all perhaps help a bit having gained some knowledge, but it is his intimate and extensive knowledge of the history and tribes and the language that really counts" (cited in Barr, p.171). Indeed, we have seen how Lawrence, the "chance witness", was exposed to the Syrians' local circumstances and national aspirations during his archaeological sojourn in the country. Importantly, however, Lawrence's reflections on the causes and aspirations of the Arab national movement in *Seven Pillars* appear to tally with much of the emerging discourse of cultural Arabism and the latter's focus on language and heritage.

To begin with, Lawrence knew that the Arabs "were fighting to get rid of Empire, not to win it" (2011, Loc. 1200). He also understood the ideal behind the struggle and its cultural underpinnings. Lawrence explains how, "The Arabs [were] nearly made shipwreck through this blindness of European advisers, who would not see that rebellion was not war: indeed, [it] was more of the nature of peace – a national strike perhaps. The conjunction of Semites, an idea, and an armed prophet held illimitable possibilities [...]" (2011, Loc. 1870-72). Lawrence's recognition of the Arabs' implied perception of their racial difference, which had at its heart the claim for the Caliphate, is significant. It shows an intricate understanding of the make-up of Ottoman society, in which Islam was not straightforwardly the only determining factor. This understanding becomes even more significant when Lawrence articulates it in relation to the linguistic connection, which, as we have seen, was part and parcel of the *Ulamas'* Ibn-Taymiyya-inspired narrative. The Arabs, Lawrence starts,

lost their geographical sense, and their racial and political and historical memories; but they clung the more tightly to their language, and erected it almost into a fatherland of its own. The first duty of every Moslem was to study the Koran, the sacred book of

²⁵² Pierce Joyce (1878-1965) was an Egyptian Army officer, who arrived at Rabigh in November 1916; he was later to become the main organiser of operations in Hejaz and Aqaba (Barr, p.xiii).

Islam, and incidentally the greatest Arab literary monument. The knowledge that this religion was his own, and that only he was perfectly qualified to understand and practise it, gave every Arab a standard by which to judge the banal achievements of the Turk. (1979, p.21)

Indeed, Lawrence appears to be echoing elements of the *Ulamas'* linguistic-based argument. More importantly, however, Lawrence's remark on the Arabs' construction of a "fatherland" seems to tally with Choueiri's historical account of the emergence of the concept of *Watan*, or fatherland, in the discourse of political Arabism. Choueiri shows how the Ottomans first introduced the concept of *Watan* in the Arab world in the nineteenth century. The original concept, which was propagated in the *Tanzimat* (reforms) era, was part of "The Noble Rescript of Gülhane",²⁵³ which "promised to guarantee the security, honour, and property of all Ottoman subjects, irrespective of race or religion" (p.71).

Significantly, the imperial rescript "highlighted for the first time the importance of defending the fatherland. It furthermore made 'love of the fatherland' a condition of introducing a fair system of justice and applying the rule of law [...]" (p.71). Crucially, however, what the rescript referred to as *Watan* was the entire Ottoman Empire (p.71). Nevertheless, the concept of *Watan*, or fatherland, was being adapted and gradually incorporated into the emerging discourse of political Arabism on *cultural and linguistic* bases (pp.70-72). In other words, what the Arabs did was to redefine the concept of fatherland in order to "embrace a limited and less vague territory than the entire Ottoman Empire" (p.72). This, Choueiri shows, coincided with the Arabs' awakening to the importance of reclaiming their "own language", in order to gain "a sense of their particular national history" (p.72). Put simply, the concept of *Watan* went hand in hand with the Arabs' rediscovery of their cultural heritage. It was, thus, redefined on similar linguistic grounds (pp.71-72).²⁵⁴

The fact that Lawrence is able to pinpoint the *linguistic basis* of the Arabs' construction of their fatherland as well as their inherent relation to Islam places him centrally in the Arab nationalist discourse. Moreover, Lawrence alludes to the Arabs' literary achievement and positions it intrinsically within Islam by referring to the Quran as "the greatest Arab literary monument". By so doing, Lawrence is paradoxically deconstructing the Islamic bond between the Turks and the Arabs by using the "sacred book of Islam" as a marker of the Arabs' 'superior' *difference* – rather than religious affinity with the Turks. In this respect, Lawrence's

²⁵³ The rescript was "officially proclaimed on 3 November 1839; [...] it was translated into Arabic and distributed in Tunisia, Egypt, Iraq, Syria and other Ottoman Arab provinces" (Choueiri, p.71).

²⁵⁴ It must be noted that the development of the term, *Watan*, went through phases before it came to indicate the entire Arab world; Choueiri shows how it was initially used to designate regions and individual countries before it embraced the Arabic-speaking world as a whole (pp.71-72).

narrative appears to mimic al-Kawakbi's disapproval of the "decay" that the Turks, with their "alien spirit", had allegedly brought to Islam. However, Lawrence is aware of Arabic literature's otherwise secular, unifying significance for the national movement. He writes, "The master-key of opinion lay in the common language: where also, lay the key of imagination. Moslems whose mother tongue was Arabic looked upon themselves for that reason as a chosen people. Their heritage of the Koran and classical literature held the Arabic-speaking peoples together. Patriotism, ordinarily of soil or race, was warped to a language" (2011, Loc. 4751-59). Indeed, Lawrence's critique of the formation of cultural Arabism appears to resonate with much of the *Ulamas'* evolving ideology.

Having drawn on the linguistic-cultural underpinnings of Arabism, Lawrence demonstrates his understanding of their strategic employability in the Caliphate narrative; he points out that

A second buttress of a polity of Arab motive was the dim glory of the early Khalifate, whose memory endured among the people through centuries of Turkish misgovernment. The accident that these traditions savoured rather of the Arabian Nights than of sheer history maintained the Arab rank and file in their conviction that their past was more splendid than the present of the Ottoman Turk. (2011, Loc. 4759-62)

After all, Lawrence was an active participant in the Arab Revolt, whose explicit aim was to restore the Caliphate. Nonetheless, even this Islamist narrative seems to become imbued with the wider nationalist aspiration of Arabism in Lawrence's reproduction of the events of the Revolt in *Seven Pillars*. On one occasion, Lawrence relates how Prince Feisal, "swore new adherents solemnly on the Koran between his hands, 'to wait while he waited, march when he marched, to yield obedience to no Turk, to deal kindly with all who spoke Arabic (whether Bagdadi, Aleppine, Syrian, or pure-blooded) and to put independence above life, family, and goods'" (2011, Loc. 2330-32). Lawrence's reconstruction of the Revolt shows how even what started off with an Islamist agenda would, in due course, be assimilated into the wider linguistic-based national narrative of Arabism.

This is further reasserted by Prince Abdullah's more 'definite' articulation of the Revolt's secular dimension.²⁵⁵ Abdullah, Lawrence states, "contrasted his hearers' present independence with their past servitude to Turkey, and roundly said that talk of Turkish heresy, or the immoral doctrine of yeni-turan, or the illegitimate Caliphate was beside the point. It was Arab country, and the Turks were in it: that was the one issue. My argument preened itself"

²⁵⁵ Prince Abdulla was Feisal's brother; he, too, was involved in the Arab campaign. Prince Abdullah was later to be crowned King of Jordan.

(2011, Loc. 2572-74). Remarkably, Lawrence's narration of these episodes seems to mimic the evolution of cultural Arabism itself. In other words, Lawrence appears to be aware of what became a functional rather than a central role of Islam in instigating the Arab movement. This, too, tallies with historians' accounts of the evolution of Arabism. As Choueiri argues, the Arabs' modification of the concept of *Watan*, which inevitably "denoted a secular dimension", was to result in casting "religion" as a "dependant variable that had to be explained within the wider context of history itself" (p.71). As we have seen, this had also been the (non-sectarian) basis for the universal praise of the Arabs' past achievement on which the *Ulamas* as well as the intelligentsia unanimously agreed.

In this light, Lawrence's absorption of the various narratives of the Arab national movement appears remarkably sophisticated. Even in the complex case of multi-creed and multi-ethnic Syria, which "remained a vividly coloured racial and religious mosaic" (Lawrence 2011, Loc. 4763-64), Lawrence appears to echo Antonius's emphasis on the unifying role of Arabic – language and literature. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Lawrence was aware of the historical lack of national sentiment in Syria. He further explains, "[t]he tale of Syria was not ended in this count of odd races and religions. Apart from the country-folk, the six great towns – Jerusalem, Beyrout, Damascus, Horns [*sic*], Hama, and Aleppo – were entities, each with its character, direction, and opinion" (2011, Loc. 4701-3). Nonetheless, Lawrence knows that "All these peoples of Syria were open to us by the master-key of their common Arabic language" (2011, Loc. 4735-39). This common language, as we have seen, was critical for bringing the Muslim and Arab intelligentsia together. As stated by Antonius above, the formation of the *Syrian Scientific Society* had indeed been a momentous event that brought together Syrians from "all creeds" for the first time in 350 years.

Thus, Lawrence's reflection on his reverse-Hajj in Arabia seems to bear resonance with the Arabs' own inclinations for the Arab Revolt.²⁵⁶ Although originating largely out of an Arabo-Islamist narrative, the Revolt was much more complex in its roots, aims and ambitions. Remarkably, Lawrence seems to demonstrate an intrinsic understanding of the contextual circumstances of the Arab national movement and its cultural narratives. Yet, as indicated

²⁵⁶ This is the reflection that we came across in Chapter Three when Lawrence's use of masquerade was being compared with Burton's. Lawrence wrote, "My thoughts as we went were how this was the pilgrim road, down which, for uncounted generations, the people of the north had come to visit the Holy City, bearing with them gifts of faith for the shrine; and it seemed that the Arab revolt might be in a sense a return pilgrimage, to take back to the north, to Syria, an ideal for an ideal, a belief in liberty for their past belief in a revelation" (2011, Loc. 838-42). Lawrence appears to accurately situate the Islamist narrative within the nationalist one and thus acknowledge its wider secular significations. In this sense, he seems to reflect Hourani's analysis of the role of Islam for the Arabs. Despite concluding that "Arab nationalism was a secular movement" (Hourani, p.295), Hourani explains that Islam would nonetheless hold a unique significance for the Arabs, for it "was what they had done in history [...]" (p.297).

earlier, the Revolt was also the military manifestation of the wider ideological discourse of cultural Arabism, which, as we have seen, had been aiming to embrace modernity on European terms. This was to have a significant impact on the Arabs' own literature and the way they came to regard it and (re)produce it from the late nineteenth century onwards. Allusions to the Arabs' reconstruction of their literary sexual morality have been made in the previous chapters. In what follows, I am going to offer an analytical overview of these changes. The chapter will then conclude with an analysis of the significance of Lawrence's own literary depiction of sexuality in *Seven Pillars*.

'Text' and 'experience': from distinction to conflation

Do not think that the love of beautiful forms (hub al-suwar al-jamilah) is only conceivable with an eye toward satisfying carnal desire, for satisfying carnal desire is a distinct pleasure that *may* be associated with the love of beautiful forms, but the perception of beauty in itself is also pleasurable and so may be loved for its own sake. How can this be denied, when greenery and flowing water are loved, not with an eye toward drinking the water or eating the greenery to obtain anything else besides the looking itself? (Abu Hamid al-Ghazali,²⁵⁷ cited in El-Rouayheb, 2009 p.54)

Flirtation, romance and courtship for [the French] take place only with women, for they are not inclined to boys or young men. Rather, that is extremely disgraceful to them. (Muhammad al-Saffar,²⁵⁸ cited in El-Rouayheb, p.2)

As we have seen in Chapter Two, Burton's insistence on translating medieval Arab works provided an interesting insight into his apparent disregard for the changing nature of Arabic literature towards the end of the nineteenth century. His disapproval of Sarkis's version of *The Arabian Nights*, which he dismissed as a "missionary" edition, is significant. Not only was Sarkis's edition the most recent version of the tales in the original Arabic, but it also represented the changes taking place in producing and reproducing Arabic literature at the time. As indicated in Chapter One, the Arabs' modern epistemological encounter with Europe was to result in one of the major shifts in their construction of literary sexual morality. In this section, I am going to throw light on the analytical background of this change and point out its inherent connection to the anti-Ottoman rhetoric in cultural Arabism.

To begin with, Khaled El-Rouayheb (2005) contrasts the "abundance" of Arabic poetry written in the early Ottoman period (1500-1800) with the "remarkable dearth" in secondary studies of this poetry in modern Arab critical discourse (p.3). He shows how this period's

²⁵⁷ Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058-1111) was "one of the most influential Islamic theologians"; the quote is from his major work, *Ihya ulum al-din* [*The Revival of Religious Sciences*], which was widely read and often quoted in early modern period (El-Rouayheb 2009, p.54).

²⁵⁸ Muhammad al-Saffar was a "Moroccan scholar, who visited Paris in 1845-46" (El-Rouayheb, 2009 p.2). His observation seems to echo al-Tahtawi's, which we have seen in Chapter One.

literature was “replete” with homoerotic references (2009, p.1). However, as explained in Chapter One, this did not imply Islam’s or the Arabs’ tolerance of the practice of ‘homosexuality’ as is often depicted in Orientalist discourse. El-Rouayheb’s central argument is that this period lacked the concept of ‘homosexuality’ as a sexual identity (2009, p.1). Instead, the Arabs’ sexual taxonomies were structured differently.²⁵⁹ As far as the homoerotic literary references are concerned, El-Rouayheb’s research shows how they did not automatically constitute an implied willingness on the part of their writers to engage in illicit sexual acts aiming to fulfil carnal lust. As pointed out in Chapter One, *ghazal al-mudhakkar* (male love) poetry signified (and was mostly perceived as) a ‘chaste’ celebration of a handsome youth’s beauty.²⁶⁰ As El-Rouayheb shows, the subgenre constituted parts and entire *Diwans* (poetry collections) of religious scholars’ (*Ulama*)²⁶¹ as well as prominent poets’ aesthetic appreciation of male beauty. El-Rouayheb shows how these writers saw a crucial distinction between poetically expressing their admiration for the beauty of the male form and physically engaging in the prohibited and severely punishable act of *liwat*, or sodomy. El-Rouayheb explains,

What Islamic law prohibits is sexual intercourse between men, especially anal intercourse. It is hardly credible to suggest that such illicit intercourse was carried out in public. What unfolded in public was presumably such things as courting and expressions of passionate love. It may seem natural for modern historians to gloss over the distinction between committing sodomy and expressing passionate love for a youth, and to describe both activities as manifestations of ‘homosexuality’. But this only goes to show that the term is anachronistic and unhelpful in this particular context. Islamic religious scholars of the period were committed to the precept that

²⁵⁹ Of course, El-Rouayheb does not imply that same-sex desire or the practice of male-to-male sexuality did not exist in this period. He is simply pointing out that a historically-conditioned “constructionist” approach to the nature of sexual categories might be more useful when studying certain phenomenon in certain societies (2009, pp.5-6). For instance, he points out how Orientalist translations of Arabic texts dealing with male-to-male sexuality often mistranslate certain terms rendering them wrongly synonymous with the modern concept of ‘homosexuality’ (p.6). El-Rouayheb shows how pre-nineteenth-century Islamic-Arab culture “operated with a set of concepts (like *ubnah* [a man’s desire to be anally penetrated] and *liwat* [sodomy, or anal intercourse between men] each of which pick out some of the acts and actors we might call ‘homosexual’ but which were simply not seen as instances of one overarching phenomenon” (p.6). See Chapter One, “Pederasts and Pathics”, in El-Rouayheb’s *Before Homosexuality in the Arab-Islamic World, 1500-1800* for an analysis of the Arabs’ categorisation of male-to-male sexuality.

²⁶⁰ In further arguing his point about the discrete distinction that Arab *Ulama* scholars and belletrists held between “falling ardently in love with a boy and expressing this love in verse” and “committing [the grave sin of] sodomy” (pp.4-5), El-Rouayheb embarks on an interesting analogy with European social attitudes towards expressions of heterosexual desire. He writes, “Until quite recently, it was common in Europe to tolerate or even value ardent love between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman but to condemn premarital sex. This combination of attitudes is only contradictory if one wrongheadedly insists on interpreting the coexisting judgments as expressions of both tolerance and intolerance of heterosexuality” (p.5). It is in this light that pre-nineteenth century Arab constructions of licit and illicit homoerotic desire are to be understood. While literature provided a lawful outlet for a poet to express his pederastic passions, any public transcendence from the textual to the practical would be frowned upon as an unlawful (and punishable) transgression.

²⁶¹ One notable example cited by El-Rouayheb is that of “Abdullah al-Shabrawi (d.1758), [...] Rector (Sheikh) of the Azhar college in Cairo” (pp.3-4). See El-Rouayheb’s analysis of the Sheikh’s famous *Diwan*, in which depictions of a young male beloved occur (p.4). El-Rouayheb revisits the Sheikh’s poetry in Chapter Two of his book, “Aesthetes”, (p.54) in which he analyses the aesthetic significance of *ghazal al-mudhakkar*.

sodomy (*liwat*) was one of the most abominable sins a man could commit.²⁶² However, many of them clearly did not believe that falling in love with a boy or expressing this love in verse was therefore also illicit. Indeed, many prominent religious scholars indulged openly in such activity. (2009, p.3)

Al-Ghazali's quote at the beginning of this section offers an analogy to the period's construction of literary sexual morality.

However, as we have seen, the nineteenth century was to bring a major shift in the Arabs' attitude towards literary depictions of homoeroticism. This, as El-Rouayheb (2009), Massad (2007) and others argue, was mainly due to the epistemologically-inclined cultural encounter with Europe. Samples of the Arabs' reaction to this encounter have been highlighted in Chapter One. One of the earlier witnesses and commentators was the scholar and chronicler, Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti (d.1825), who, as discussed in Chapter One, recorded the events of the French expedition in Egypt. A member of the *Ulama* class, al-Jabarti was conscious of the importance of the Arab element in what he saw as the "indigenous people of Egypt", to whom he referred as "sons of the Arabs" as opposed to the other groups (Mamlukes, Ottomans, Albanians and others) who inhabited and/or ruled Egypt at the time (cited in Choueiri, p.67). As we have seen, al-Jabarti praised the French scholarship as well as their effort in spreading knowledge in Egypt at the time of the expedition. Nonetheless, his views were less than flattering concerning certain aspects of French manners and morality, particularly in relation to the sexual conduct of French women. The same religious scholar, however, would make a clear moral distinction between "refined pederastic love affairs" and the "vulgar" pursuit of "handsome youths" for "less than refined motives" (El-Rouayheb, 2009 p.156). This, El-Rouayheb's research concludes, was simply because "[f]alling in love with a teenage youth and expressing this love in verse were not [seen as] punishable offenses" (p.153). In other words, "[w]riting a love poem of a male youth would simply not fall under juridical concept of *liwat*" (p.6).

However, "[b]etween the middle of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth century, the prevalent tolerance of the passionate love of boys was eroded, presumably owing – at least in part – to the adoption of European Victorian attitudes by the new, modern-educated and westernized elite" (El-Rouayheb, p.156). Another transitional

²⁶² One of the interesting distinctions of pre-nineteenth-century Arab-Islamic concepts of male-to-male sexuality lies in the recommended punishments for its practice. El-Rouayheb's research shows how the above-mentioned distinction between *ubnah* and *liwat* also carried different connotations. *Ubnah* was seen as a condition that a *ma'bun* may summer from, whereas *liwat* was seen as temptation that any man may be exposed to, hence the difference in their punishment for some Hanbalist jurists (pp.20-22). Also, see (pp.118-128) for an overview of *liwat*'s punishment in the different schools of jurisprudence in Islam.

figure, who also belonged to the *Ulama* class, is Rifa'ah al-Tahtawi, whom we met in Chapter One as well as earlier in this chapter. As shown in Chapter One, al-Tahtawi's account of the French, which he based on his sojourn in France (1826-1831), resembled that of his predecessor, al-Jabarti, in that both scholars appreciated French scholarship and scientific achievement on the one hand while condemning what they perceived as symptoms of moral and sexual debasement. Al-Tahtawi's much quoted passage in which he remarks the disparity in themes of *ghazal* (or love) poetry between French and Arabic literatures also highlights the scholar's awareness of the encroachment of modernity that was coming from the West.

[The French] consider this [the love of boys] to be an example of moral corruption, and they are right. And this is because each gender inclines towards a distinct property possessed by the other gender, just as magnets have distinct properties that attract iron or electricity has distinct prosperities that attracts things, and so forth. Thus, when the genders are the same the distinct properties are absent, and [the attraction] becomes unnatural [...]" (cited in El-Rouayheb, 2009 p.156)

The *Ulama*-class scholar's observation is already contaminated with a subtle value-based judgement indicating a sense of 'natural' as opposed to "unnatural" attraction. As El-Rouayheb points out, al-Tahtawi's "electricity"-based analogy is conscious of the 'advanced' scientific significance of the modern "European phenomenon" (p.156). Needless to say, this view is particularly significant when considering al-Tahtawi's non-sectarian praise for all Arabs and the 'superiority' of their manners²⁶³ – which is contrasted with his view of French morality as shown earlier.

Another Arab scholar visiting Paris in 1845-46, Muhammad al-Saffar, would come to echo al-Tahtawi's observation on the French disapproval of courting boys in poetry.²⁶⁴ By the end of the century, however, the Arabs' rather bewildered sense of interest in this difference in poetic norms would slowly but surely turn into a sense of discomfort. For their pro-European epistemological quest would result in a process of internalisation and assimilation of European norms. From al-Tahtawi's semi-scientific analogy of what constitutes 'natural' and 'unnatural' attraction, the Arabs' increasing exposure to European scholarship would result in adopting their "*weltanschauung*", as pointed out by Abu-Lughod in Chapter One. Reflecting on this adoption in relation to western discourse on sex and sexuality, Massad (2007) writes,

In adopting this *Weltanschauung*, Arab intellectuals also internalized this epistemology by which Europeans came to judge civilizations and cultures along the vector of

²⁶³ As indicated earlier in this chapter, al-Tahtawi's celebration of 'Arab ethnicity' highlights the pro-Arab nationalist narrative in the *Ulama* strand of cultural Arabism. Some of the "virtues", which al-Tahtawi singled out for the Arabs (Muslim, Christian, Jewish and pagan) include: "generosity, magnanimity, noble character, readiness to assist those in distress and fulfillment of promises and obligation" (Choueiri, p.70).

²⁶⁴ Al-Saffar's quote is cited at the beginning of this section.

something called 'sex', as well as its later derivative 'sexuality', and the overall systemization of culture through the statistical concept of 'norms', often corresponding to the 'natural' and its 'deviant' opposite. (p.6)

Indeed, attitudes concerning 'norms' and 'normality' in relation to literary depiction of homoeroticism had been changing steadily since these earlier accounts. As early as 1859, Butrus al-Bustani, whom we have come across earlier in this chapter as a prominent figure of the Christian intelligentsia, would criticise "the present of the Arabs as one of 'decadence'" for it existed under a "fallen state" (cited in Massad, p.8). As we have seen, al-Bustani, like his fellow Muslim nationalists, had emphasised the importance of the Arabic language as well as the Arabs' literary cultural heritage. Interestingly, however, al-Bustani's otherwise eager intellectual inquiry into all that highlighted the Arabs' 'glorious civilisation' in the past would take a distinctly different attitude towards what came to be perceived as symptoms of decay and corruption.

In one of the first modern accounts of literary history of Arabic, *Udaba' al-Arab* (*The Arabs' Literary Authors*), al-Bustani distinguishes between "two trends of early Arabic poetry: the chaste love poetry of the Bedouins and the 'dissolute' love poetry of the townspeople" (El-Rouayheb, p.156-57). He singles out the eighth century as the time when the latter trend

became more widespread and gained more adherents, and they [townspeople] invented a new type of it, reflecting the extent of depravity to which they had sunk, and this type is what is called 'the love poetry of the male' (*ghazal al-mudhakkar*). The reason for its emergence was the mixing of Arabs with the rich non-Arabs, and the great number of slave boys from Turkish, Daylamite, and Byzantine areas. (cited in El-Rouayheb, p.157)

El-Rouayheb argues that al-Bustani's adoption of "Victorian European disapproval of pederastic themes in Arabic literature" (p.156) explains the fact that he did not seem to be able to envisage that "there could be anything other than depravity and moral corruption in this poetic theme" (p.157). Furthermore, El-Rouayheb points out that al-Bustani's chapter on the libertine poet, Abu Nuwas, was severely critical of the latter's "'sick and depraved' character as well as his "dissolute self [which] turned him away from proper love" (El-Rouayheb, p.157). Apart from this demeaning criticism of the theme of *ghazal al-mudhakkar*, al-Bustani "hardly dealt with the topic at all" (p.157). As El-Rouayheb points out, "one would not suspect from [al-Bustani's] literary history that there was a millennium-old tradition of chaste Arabic love poetry of boys [...]" (p.157).

More importantly, al-Bustani's allusion to the 'foreign' origin of this trend would become one of the standard justifications of the existence of *ghazal al-mudhakkar* in Arabic

literature in the first place.²⁶⁵ In fact, the entire Ottoman period would be dubbed as the “dark ages” of Arab civilisation “despite the fact that Islamic power and culture continued to flourish [...] reaching new heights under the Ottoman [...] empire” (Choueiri, p.58). As Massad argues, “[t]he most successful pedagogy that Orientalism [...] and the [European cultural] encounter would bequeath to [...] Arab intellectuals was [...] an epistemological affinity that would inform all their archaeological efforts” (p.5). As shown above, the willingness to embrace European modernity had been an integral part of this “epistemological affinity”, which characterises the Arab *Nahda*. In this regard, Schulze (1987, 191-92) points out that “*Nahda* required a concept of cultural decadence, for how else was the claim of culture renewal to be justified?” (cited in Massa, p.5). And it was precisely the Ottoman era, the ‘Age of *Inhitat*’ (degeneration), that had been singled out as the Arabs’ period of cultural decadence. As Massad puts it, “[i]t was by repudiating the more recent past and by reviving the ancient past that the Arabs of the present could chart their project for modern life” (p.2007, p.51). Importantly, however, this “civilizational” project, which was “part and parcel of the rising anti-Ottoman Arab nationalism” (Massad, p.47), saw European notions as the “natural scientific tools [...] that could be” used to edit the outcome (p.53).

Apart from al-Bustani’s disregard for the prevalence and relevance of the theme of *ghazal al-mudhakkar* in his historical account of Arabic literature in the nineteenth century, in Chapter Two we have already seen an early twentieth-century example indicating the denouncement of what came to be regarded as ‘impolite’ and ‘non-compatible’ themes in the Arab ‘civilizational’ project. Juri Zaydan’s 1902-criticism of Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq’s *Al-Saq ‘ala al-Saq* (1855),²⁶⁶ in which the latter discussed the medieval Arabs’ sexual habits *disapprovingly*, marks a significant turning point in the changing discourse of sexual morality in the Arab *Nahda*. For despite al-Shidyaq’s disapproval of these habits and associating them with the

²⁶⁵ In this regard, Massad argues, “The ability of nationalism to interpellate historical figures a posteriori as ‘Arab’ or ‘foreign’ is matched by its categorical ability to expel from and incorporate desires and places into ‘tradition’ in a procrustean manner. If this meant nationalists must misread the historical evidence to produce an ancient Arab civilization in line with modern nationalist criteria, they, like nationalists everywhere, would not shy away from their mission” (2007, p.112). Massad’s Introduction as well as the first two chapters of his book, *Desiring Arabs*, offer a detailed discussion of first- and second-generation *Nahda* scholars’ reactions to the depiction of homoeroticism in their literary heritage. While these reactions varied with the various critics and historians, the subgenre of *ghazal al-mudhakkar* was being systematically eroded. Nonetheless, it must be pointed out that not all *Nahda* critics and historians regarded Arabic literature’s depiction of homoeroticism as a source for embarrassment. Taha Hussein and Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi are notable examples of those who viewed the literary phenomenon differently. See Massad’s study for a detailed account of the various scholars’ perspectives.

²⁶⁶ Faris al-Shidyaq (1804-87), a first-generation *Nahda* scholar, was born in Lebanon to a Catholic (Maronite) family (Hourani 2009, p.97). Al-Shidyaq then became a Protestant and went to England in 1848 to “help in an Arabic version of the New Testament” (p.98). It was in Paris when al-Shidyaq composed his aforementioned book in which he demonstrated “the capacity of the Arabic language” (p.98). It was also in Paris when al-Shidyaq was thought to have converted to Islam, hence the addition of ‘Ahmad’ to his name (p.98). His Arabic newspaper appeared between 1860 and 1883 (p.98).

moral decay that led to the Arabs' destruction, the mere reference to these habits and the use of certain terms to express notions of 'bawdiness' would become unacceptable in polite Arab literary and critical discourse (Massad, pp.36-37).²⁶⁷ To be sure, as critics show, such "attitudes did not change overnight" (El-Rouayheb, p.157).²⁶⁸ However, the change can be measured by the systematic expurgation of classical Arabic texts that were being reprinted since the late nineteenth century. Apart from *The Arabian Nights*, which, as we have seen in Chapter Two, had been undergoing a specific type of expurgation targeting its homoerotic episodes, many other classical texts, were being expurgated on similar grounds.²⁶⁹ Moreover, this systematic expurgation was justified and publically articulated in the critical discourse of Arab *Nahda*. In the early twentieth century, the above-mentioned Zaydan would go further to warn his readers from seeking the poetry of *ghazal al-mudhakkar* (El-Rouayheb, p.157-58).²⁷⁰ By 1925, a textbook of the history of Arabic literature was taught in secondary and higher education in Egypt; the book denounced *ghazal al-mudhakkar* as a "crime against literature and a disgrace to the history of Arabic poetry" (El-Rouayheb, p.158).

To be sure, dwelling further on the intricate details of this cultural shift is an independent area of research. However, what I have aimed to show is the dramatic shift in the Arabs' cultural attitudes towards depictions of homoeroticism in their literature and its inherent relation to the rise in nationalism. Drawing on El-Rouayheb's justification for the uniform prevalence of homoerotic references in pre-nineteenth Arabic literature, we have seen how the Arabs of the period had a distinctly different structure for regulating literary sexual morality. The poetic celebration of *ishq* (passionate love) for handsome youths did not necessarily suggest a transgression towards the sinful and prohibited act of *liwat*. This unique determining factor of the Arabs' sexual morality seems to be the very *antithesis* of Orientalist

²⁶⁷ Massad shows how by 1946 the "credibility" of previous accounts of literary homoeroticism was being questioned (p.36).

²⁶⁸ As El-Rouayheb (2009, p.157) and Massad (p.35) show, some Hafiz Ibrahim (1872-1932) was perhaps the last poet to compose boy-love poetry in the twentieth century. As Massad points out, *ghazal al-mudhakkar* poetry "disappeared completely as a poetic genre or subgenre" in the early twentieth century, with the exception of "a few marginal poets" (p.35); see Massad (p.35) for more details.

²⁶⁹ Some of these works include the seventeenth-century satirical work, *Hazz al-quhuf* (*The Shaking of Craniums*), which was reprinted in the nineteenth-century and the first decade of the twentieth century in Cairo (El-Rouayheb, p.160). The work, which was "replete" with pederastic references, was to be published for the first time in half a century in 1963; albeit in a heavily expurgated form that removed all the homoerotic references (p.160). Other works, including a *ghazal-mudhakkar*-free *Diwan* of Abu Nuwas's poetry was published in Cairo in 1932; the editor's introduction made no reference to Abu Nuwas's boy-love poetry (p.158). Other works, which survived until the first two decades of the twentieth century include the fifteenth-century work, *Jannat al-wildan fi al-hisan min al-ghilman* (*The Paradise of Boys: On Handsome Youths*) as well as the fourteenth-century work, *Law'at al-shaki wa dam'at l-kabi* (*The Complaints of the Lovelorn and Tears of the Disconsolate*); the latter was a text "in rhyme prose describing a man's passionate love for a boy" (El-Rouayheb, p.157).

²⁷⁰ This was done in his Arabic adaptation of Carl Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur*, which he published in Cairo in 1911-14 (El-Rouayheb, p.157). The German Orientalist's multi-volume book is seen as the "first modern comprehensive history of Arabic literature from the pre-Islamic period to the early twentieth century" (Massad, p.54).

conflation of 'text' and 'experience'. As we have seen, both Burton and Lawrence's Orientalist interaction with the Arab East was a process of conflating 'text' and 'experience' in complex ways to achieve their ends. By adopting European Victorian attitudes, the *Nahda* scholars were deconstructing their own cultural code of literary sexual morality by mimicking Orientalist discourse's conflation of 'text' and 'experience'.

This conflation, however, resulted in very different and paradoxical significances for Orientalists such as Burton and Lawrence on the one hand, and the heritage-conscious Arab intelligentsia, on the other. While Burton and Lawrence's conflation proved enabling for them, the Arabs' adopted conflation proved very problematic and caused much anxiety over their "civilizational project".²⁷¹ Nonetheless, another paradox can also be explored in Lawrence's rendition of homoeroticism in his depiction of the Arab campaign in *Seven Pillars*. When the Arabs' past depiction of homoerotic desire was being condemned and cast away in the emerging discourse of cultural Arabism, Lawrence seems to have been accentuating it while endowing it with a significance of a different order altogether. In what follows, I am going to offer an analysis of Lawrence's value-based depiction of homoeroticism in *Seven Pillars*. By juxtaposing his different depictions of Arab male-to-male sexuality and its Turkish counterpart, I would like to show how Lawrence's construction of Arab homoeroticism stands in stark contrast with its changing significance in the *Nahda* discourse. The irony lies in the disparity between Lawrence's remarkable awareness of the cultural background of Arabism on the one hand, and his rendition of Arabian homoeroticism within it, on the other.

Homoeroticism between the heroic and anti-heroic

We got off our camels and stretched ourselves, sat down or walked before supper to the sea and bathed by hundreds, a splashing, screaming, mob of fish-like naked men of all earth's colours. (Lawrence 2011, Loc. 2012-13)

When looked at from this torrid East, our British conception of woman seemed to partake of the northern climate which had also contracted our faith. In the Mediterranean, woman's influence and supposed purpose were made cogent by an understanding in which she was accorded the physical world in simplicity, unchallenged, like the poor in spirit. Yet this same agreement, by denying equality of sex, made love, companionship and friendliness impossible between man and woman. Woman became a machine for muscular exercise, while man's psychic side could be slaked only amongst his peers. Whence arose these partnerships of man and man, to supply human nature with more than the contact of flesh with flesh. (Lawrence 2011, Loc. 7344-48)

²⁷¹ See Chapter One, "Anxiety in Civilization", in Massad's *Desiring Arabs* for a detailed account of the ramifications of this anxiety.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, at the heart of Lawrence's personal motive for taking part in the Arab Revolt lies a complex combination of homoerotic and nationalist-driven narratives. While Dahoum appears to have symbolised the connection of these two attractions for Lawrence, other accounts in *Seven Pillars* seem to lend further support to his discursive portrayal of homoeroticism and nationalism. In this section, I am going to juxtapose Lawrence's depiction of homoerotic display in the Arab camp with his accounts on Turkish male-to-male sexuality in the Ottoman army. I would like to highlight what seems to be a conscious and discursive correspondence between assigned significations for Lawrence's two very different portrayals of male-to-male sexuality between the two camps.

To begin with, it is important perhaps to throw light on Lawrence's pre-war association with a circle of Uranian figures when at Oxford. Lawrence befriended Leonard Green, a Uranian poet,²⁷² and the two planned to set up their own press where Green's otherwise difficult to publish verses would be "suitable material for the projected press" (James 1996, p.36). James attributes Lawrence's homoerotic strands in *Seven Pillars* to his "Uranian preoccupations" (p.37). Moreover, James shows how young Lawrence's "masculine" "home life" meant that he did not associate with girls or women of his age (p.35).²⁷³ While this may account for the occasional bursts of misogyny in his narrative in *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence's preference for all-male company does not account for the selectiveness with which he depicts Arab and Turkish accounts of homosexual interaction. Instead, as I will show in this section, Lawrence's depictions of Oriental homosexuality and homoerotic behaviour are discursive in that their assigned significations seem to correspond with those displaying the sexual/erotic act – not the act itself. While Lawrence's portrayal of the Arab camp's sexuality synthesises the homoerotic with the heroic (the nationalist struggle), his main accounts of Turkish homosexuality seem to associate the sadist with the destructive (the imperialist aggression). Hence, Lawrence's value-based reproductions of the Eastern War's male-to-male sexuality.

Lawrence's connection between the homoerotic and the heroic in his portrayal of the Arab camp is evident from the very beginning. Importantly, however, Lawrence appears to

²⁷² Green was a "member of the secret homosexual order of Chaeronea (founded in 1890); he also belonged to a circle of Uranian writers, which included Lord Alfred Douglas and F.W. Rolfe ('Baron Corvo') (James, p.36). Boys' innocence and sensuality inspired Uranian writers (James, p.36). Lawrence was attracted to Uranian themes; he included two Uranian pieces in his collected anthology of minor poetry in the 1920s (p.37). As indicated in Chapter Three, Lawrence's relationship with Dahoum had a "whiff of the Uranian" about it, as James puts it (p.69). See James (pp.34-38) for details on Lawrence's homosexual acquaintances and his other Uranian-inclined themes of interest.

²⁷³ James observes that this was due to Lawrence's strict upbringing; the mother, James points out, "kept the girls at bay" (p.35). In this regard, James also suggests that Lawrence had no (hetero)sexual experience by the time he was in the RAF. He quotes Robert Graves, who reportedly suspected that Lawrence did not know how "to fuck" (James, p.35).

emphasise the situational platform of this connection. Explaining how “[g]usts of cruelty, perversions [and] lusts ran lightly over the surface without troubling us” (1979, p.9), he is quick to situate these physical feelings within the nationalist narrative of the campaign. Remarking the trying conditions in which he and the Arab freedom fighters had been operating, Lawrence notes how such physical and mental exhaustion resulted in a divorce between the spirit and the body. “Therefore”, he continues,

we abandoned [the body] as rubbish: we left it below us to march forward, a breathing simulacrum, on its own unaided level, subject to influences from which in normal times our instincts would have shrunk. The men were young and sturdy; and hot flesh and blood unconsciously claimed a right in them and tormented their bellies with strange longings. Our privations and dangers fanned this virile heat, in a climate as racking as can be conceived. We had no shut places to be alone in, no thick clothes to hide our nature. Man in all things lived candidly with man. (1979, p.9)

While Lawrence’s subtle allusion to the climatic factor in this Oriental display of same-sex desire may be reminiscent of Burton’s (and other Orientalists’) views on the subject, it recalls the rather ‘heroic’ asceticism that endows much of Doughty’s depiction of the desert and its impact on those who journey through it.²⁷⁴ However, Lawrence’s departure from “normal times” and his emphasis on the heroism that appears to be fanning such “influences” among the men endows the nationalist struggle of the fellowship of Arab fighters with a *causative* effect. In other words, Lawrence appears to be suggesting an intrinsic link between the nationalist-imbued display of same-sex desire in the Arab camp and its seemingly natural development under the given circumstances – the ideological unity of a fellowship of freedom fighters. Indeed, the passage indicates a fluid movement from the *heroic* to the *homoerotic* – a recurrent theme in Lawrence’s depiction of Arab sexuality throughout the book.

²⁷⁴ As Tabachnick (1973) illustrates in his comparative study of Doughty and Lawrence and their contributions to the tradition of Anglo-Arab travel writing, “heroism” and the “desire to relive the past” are at the forefront of Anglo-Arab travel writers, despite being confronted with different realities; he writes, “While the desire to re-live past ages of heroism remains ingrained at the unconscious level, the realities of present discomforts become too intrusive for the traveller to disregard. As a result, Doughty’s combination of naturalistic detail and mythologized characters, setting and dialogues has something in common with Kinglake’s blend of rapture and ironic undercutting. These Arabian travellers *want* to see the heroic and inspiring in the desert from the start, but must constantly come down to earth when they behold the reality. This same combination of unpleasant reality and heroic characters finds its place in *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* as well. But when Jean Beraud-Villars decides that ‘its balance between romanticism and naturalism was the essence of a new form of literature,’ he praises the originality of *Seven Pillars* at some expense to other Arabian travel works in which what the traveller wishes he might have seen and what he actually did see, exist side by side in discordance.” (1973, p.12) Indeed, we have sampled accounts of Lawrence’s reaction to certain manifestations of this “unpleasant reality” in the previous chapter. What I would like to add to Beraud-Villars’s argument above is a detailed analysis of Lawrence’s rendition of this “balance between romanticism and naturalism” in relation to his polarised depiction of male-to-male desire in the Arab and the Turkish camps respectively in this section.

This combination of the heroic and the homoerotic appears to be inherently functional. For it endows the Arab camp with a sense of homogeneity, as Lawrence seems to suggest; he writes,

The Arab was by nature continent; and the use of universal marriage had nearly abolished irregular courses in his tribes. The public women of the rare settlements we encountered in our months of wandering would have been nothing to our numbers, even had their raddled meat been palatable to a man of healthy parts. In horror of such sordid commerce our youth began indifferently to slake one another's few needs in their own clean bodies – a cold convenience that, by comparison, seemed sexless, even pure. Later, some began to justify this sterile process, and sower that friends quivering together in the yielding sand with intimate hot limbs in supreme embrace, found there hidden in the darkness a sensual co-efficient of the mental passion which was welding our souls and spirits in one flaming effort. Several, thirsting to punish appetites they could not whole prevent, took a savage pride in degrading the body, and offered themselves fiercely in any habit which promised physical pain or filth. (1979, p.9)

In Lawrence's narrative, the heroic appears to spontaneously beget the homoerotic in a seemingly evolutionary paradigm, resulting in a romantic bond of homogeneity. Indeed, the collective articulation of homoerotic desire in the Arab camp renders the men's fellowship somehow self-gratifying and autoerotic. The misogynistic strand, on the other hand, lends support to this 'perfect' image of all-male homogeneity, whose homoerotic bonding seems to further strengthen its harmonious nationalist unity. The juxtaposition of the women's "raddled meat" with the youths' "healthy parts" seems to casually justify the latter's preference to "slake one another's few needs in their own clean bodies" – a manifestation of the Arab camp's collective autoeroticism and self-sufficiency. More importantly, the youths' rejection of the "public women" and their "horror" at "such sordid commerce" is discursively contrasted with their own rationale for turning to one another. For by "quivering together" the youths discovered a "sensual co-efficient of the mental passion", the purpose of which was to weld their "souls and spirits in one flaming effort", hence the functional homogeneity of the homoerotic and the heroic in the Arab camp.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁵ As implied earlier, the Arab camp, with its collective of freedom fighters sharing a common 'noble' ideal, constitutes a form of 'fellowship'. Lawrence's depiction of the Arab camp's camaraderie strikes resonance with Malory's emphasis on the 'fellowship' of the Knights of the Round Table and their unification behind their Oath. Helen Cooper (1998) argues that while Malory's book encompasses the entire history of Arthur, it details the individual stories and legends of the major knights (p.xiii); she continues, "The important thing, however, is that they [the knights] do make up a *fellowship*. They support each other, rescue each other, 'enfellowship' with each other - the verb is Malory's own coinage" (p.xiii). Lawrence, on the other hand, relates the grand plot of the Arab Revolt while presenting subplots of individual prominent tribesmen and leaders within. Indeed, Lawrence's grand narrative is enriched by the mini-narratives of real, fictional and semi-fictional characters (Hussein, Feisal, Abdullah, Ali, the mighty Auda Abu Tayi, among many others), who, together, form the collective of the Arab camp's fellowship. The Arab army's 'fellowship' will be linked to Lawrence's homoerotic rendition of the theme of 'courtly love' in certain passages of *Seven Pillars*.

Indeed, Lawrence would also cite battlefield examples of this bond, demonstrating its functional harmony in the Arab camp. On one occasion, Lawrence is mildly injured in the foot after blowing up a Turkish train. The Arab fighters, headed by Ali and Turki,²⁷⁶ run to his aid along with Turki's servants and some men from the Bani Sakhr tribe. However, the surviving Turks from the exploded train manage to find "their range and [get] seven of [the Arabs] in a few seconds" (2011, Loc. 6192-96). Yet "the others", Lawrence explains, "in a rush, were about me – fit models, after their activity, for a sculptor. Their full white cotton drawers drawn in, bell-like, round their slender waists and ankles; their hairless brown bodies; and the love-locks plaited tightly over each temple in long horns, made them look like Russian dancers" (2011, Loc. 6192-96).²⁷⁷ The heroic and the homoerotic are part and parcel of Lawrence's portrayal of the Arab camp. Moreover, the mounted men's attack on the Turkish train endows their bravery with further chivalric significance, recalling Lawrence's romantic vision and his anti-modernity stance.

Yet this is further highlighted in Lawrence's polarisation of the make-up of the two camps and their respective significations. In a clear reference to the distinct basis of the Arab camp – in contrast with the modern organisation of regular armies – Lawrence writes,

We were serving a common ideal, without tribal emulation, and so could not hope for *esprit de corps*. Ordinary soldiers were made a caste either by great rewards in pay, dress and privilege: or by being cut off from life by contempt. We could not so knit man to man, for our tribesmen were in arms willingly. Many armies had been voluntarily enlisted: few served voluntarily. Any of our Arabs could go home without penalty whenever the conviction failed him: the only contract was honour. (2011, Loc. 4803-6)

The Arab camp's "contract" of "honour" signals its chivalric constitution, which seems to go hand in hand with the homoeroticism embedded in its conduct. The particular bond that characterises the camp's conduct is exposed in another passage in Lawrence's narrative; Lawrence explains,

²⁷⁶ Prince Ali ibn el-Hussein is Feisal and Abdullah's brother. According to Lawrence, Ali was in love with a seventeen-year-old "lad" called Turki, who fought in the Arab Revolt along with his father, Mifleh. Lawrence observes how Ali and Turki expressed their love for another; he writes, "[...] the animal in each called to the other, and they wandered about inseparably, taking pleasure in a touch and silence. He [Turki] was a fair, open-faced boy of perhaps seventeen; not tall, but broad and powerful, with a round freckled face, upturned nose, and very short upper lip, showing his strong teeth, but giving his full mouth rather a sulky look, belied by the happy eyes" (Loc. 5815-19). As is evident in this account, the heroic seems to go hand in hand with the homoerotic in the Arab camp. Another two young lovers are Daud and Farraj; their love affair will be analysed in further detail later in this section.

²⁷⁷ Lawrence's portrayal of the slim and evidently handsome half-naked Arab fighters (with their plaited love-locks and feather-like "white cotton drawers" that are drawn "round their slender waists and ankles"), whom he consciously likens to "Russian dancers", evokes imagery from Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. It would be tempting to pursue this line of thought and try to determine whether this may have been a subtle allusion to Tchaikovsky's ballet on Lawrence's part; however, this would have to be considered in another project.

To me an unnecessary action, or shot, or casualty, was not only waste but sin. I was unable to take the professional view that all successful actions were gains. Our rebels were not materials, like soldiers, but friends of ours, trusting our leadership. We were not in command nationally, but by invitation; and our men were volunteers, individuals, local men, relatives, so that a death was a personal sorrow to many in the army. Even from the purely military point of view the assault seemed to me a blunder. (2011, Loc. 2149-52)

Indeed, the Arab army's make-up is far from regular. Its nationalist cause combines the heroic and the romantic without resorting to the modern. After all, the Arabs were not fighting a war; it was, a "rebellion", and the army was a "conjunction of Semites" with an "idea" and an "armed prophet". As indicated above, Lawrence's emphasis on the intrinsic nature of the chivalrous values that constitute the Arab army's camaraderie is reminiscent of Malory's depiction of the fellowship of the Knights of the Round Table and its commitment to a principle of knightly honour, i.e. the Oath. In this light, Lawrence's desire to "relive the past" and experience its "heroism" is a further manifestation of his importance as a successor to Doughty, albeit in his own right and through his original narrative.

The connection between Malory's and Lawrence's portrayals of knightly fellowship will be revisited and further elaborated on at the end of this section. For the time being, however, I would like to expose Lawrence's (very different) representation of the Turkish and British military camps first. Indeed, in contrast to the Arab army's image of affinity and medieval-style camaraderie stands Lawrence's depiction of the modern Ottoman army. He writes,

In Turkey things were scarce and precious, men less esteemed than equipment. Our cue was to destroy, not the Turk's army, but his minerals. The death of a Turkish bridge or rail, machine or gun or charge of high explosive, was more profitable to us than the death of a Turk. In the Arab Army at the moment we were chary both of materials and of men. Governments saw men only in mass; but our men, being irregulars, were not formations, but individuals. An individual death, like a pebble dropped in water, might make but a brief hole; yet rings of sorrow widened out therefrom. We could not afford casualties. (2011, Loc. 2614-19)

Lawrence's emphasis on the individuality of the Arab army's fighters is significant. Not only is he repudiating modernity's ramifications on warfare, but he also seems to be alluding to the correspondence between imperialist policies and their impact on individuals. Unlike the individually-valued nationalist fighters of the Arab Revolt, the Turkish soldiers become a "mass".

Yet what the Turkish army has in common with the British one, Lawrence's 'other' alliance, is the fact that both modern armies were fighting for empire, as indicated earlier. From this connection Lawrence seems to draw an analogy that similarly, but not identically,

characterises the ‘mechanical’ conduct of the British army. Noting the observations of a Sherari Arab boy who confided in him, Lawrence relates the boy’s fascination with the English soldiers. According to Lawrence, the boy remarked how

each soldier carried himself apart like a family, and that he felt something of defence in their tight, insufficient clothes and laborious appearance. He was fluttering in skirts, head-cloth and cloak. They had only shirts and shorts, puttees and boots, and the breeze could take no hold on them. Indeed, they had worn these things so long day and night in heat and sweat, busied about the dusty oily cars, that the cloth had set to their bodies, like bark to a tree. Then they were all clean-shaven, and all dressed alike; and his eye, which most often distinguished man from man by clothes, here was baffled by an outward uniformity. To know them apart he must learn their individual, as though naked, shapes. Their food took no cooking, their drink was hot, they hardly spoke to one another; but then a word sent them into fits of incomprehensible crackling laughter, unworthy and inhuman. His belief was that they were my slaves, and that there was little rest or satisfaction in their lives, though to a Sherari it would have been luxury so to travel like the wind, sitting down; and a privilege to eat meat, tinned meat, daily. (2011, Loc. 8149-56)

This ‘mechanical’ image sits uncomfortably with Lawrence’s romantic portrayal of the Arab army. The juxtaposition of uniformity and individuality in this scene is also reminiscent of his description of the Turkish camp. For, unlike the Arabs, the British and the Ottomans share an imperialist inclination, which seems to correspond with the modern structure of their armies. As Lawrence explains, contrary to the British and the Ottomans, “[w]e”, the Arabs, “had nothing material to lose, so our best line was to defend nothing and to shoot nothing. Our cards were speed and time, not hitting power” (Loc. 2651-56).

Of course, one may cast doubt on whether the remarks above were truly made by the Sherari boy. Indeed, the question may be applied to Lawrence’s entire narrative in *Seven Pillars*. However, whether or not these accounts are factual, semi-factual or even entirely imagined does not change the fact that this is Lawrence’s own “personal narrative” of the historical epic, which, in his admission, “does not pretend to be impartial”, hence the work’s generic relevance to life writing, as indicated in the previous chapter. In fact, its potential partiality, a typical feature of life writing, endows it with further significance, for it exposes Lawrence’s own prejudices and emphasizes on what, *to him*, seems to have constituted the Arab Revolt and the power interplay within it. In other words, this is Lawrence’s reading of the various narratives involved in the war in the East. Despite its admittedly subjective bias, the validity and the importance of Lawrence’s viewpoint can perhaps be justified by his evident awareness of the contextual background and underpinnings of the Arab national movement, as shown earlier in this chapter. Consequently, his emphasis on the homoerotic element in his

rendition of the Arab camp's conduct is also significant. I will come back to this point when I have completed my comparative analysis of Lawrence's portrayal of each camp.

Thus, if modernity infiltrated both the British and the Turkish imperial armies and structured them in such mechanical manners, the national movement, for which the Arabs were fighting, would have a very different impact on their army structure. Unlike the unworthiness of the "mass" of the Turkish army and the dull systematic uniformity of the British army, the Arab army combines all-male homogeneity with a distinctively colourful variation. Indeed, we have had a glimpse of this colourfulness in the march-to-Wajh scene in Chapter Three; that is, when the royally-dressed Lawrence was behind Feisal flaunting the latter's wedding garment. Describing another march, Lawrence writes,

It was strangely unlike the usual desert-constancy. All day the grey-green expanse of stones and bushes quivered like a mirage with the movement of men on foot; and horsemen; men on camels; camels bearing the hunched black loads which were the goat-hair tent-cloths; camels swaying curiously, like butterflies, under the winged and fringed howdahs of the women; camels tusked like mammoths or tailed like birds with the cocked or dragging tent-poles of silvery poplar. There was no order nor control nor routine of march, other than the wide front, the self-contained parties, the simultaneous start, which the insecurity of countless generations had made instinctive. The difference was that the desert, whose daily sparseness gave value to every man, to-day seemed with their numbers suddenly to come alive. (2011, Loc. 3769-75)

One can perhaps understand the Sherari boy's alleged bafflement at the structure of the British army, which in fact is the very opposite of this machine-free colourfully diverse army. Unlike the robotic structure of the British army with its oily cars and reliance on discipline and technology, the Arabs' march had "no order"; it was much connected to nature, the desert, which would even "come alive".

Yet the Arab army's visible diversity does not detract from its homogenous functionality. On the contrary, it seems to endow it with advantages, specific to Oriental life. For, despite its celebrated all-male constitution, the Arab army also possesses feminine, or 'female-derived', qualities extending its homogeneity into further realms of collaboration; Lawrence writes,

The Arab leaders showed a completeness of instinct, a reliance upon intuition, the unperceived foreknown, which left our centrifugal minds gasping. Like women, they understood and judged quickly, effortlessly, unreasonably. It almost seemed as though the Oriental exclusion of woman from politics had conferred her particular gifts upon the men. Some of the speed and secrecy of our victory, and its regularity, might perhaps be ascribed to this double endowment's offsetting and emphasizing the rare feature that from end to end of it there was nothing female in the Arab movement, but the camels. (2011, Loc. 2945-49)

Thus, paradoxically, Oriental banishment of women from the public sphere seems to have resulted in men's adoption of women's "gifts", which, in turn, appears to strengthen male bonding in the Arab army and further facilitate their collaboration. This, of course, cannot be said of the British army's strict all-masculine conduct. The harmonious blending of the masculine and the feminine in the Arab camp seems to complement the army's performance and add to its spontaneous sense of homogeneity. Importantly, however, while this homogeneity still lies in its *all-male* constitution, the army, nonetheless, combines masculine and feminine qualities, hence its implied 'superiority', as Lawrence seems to suggest.

Lawrence's romanticisation of the Arab army's structure and conduct can, of course, be seen as part of his pro-Arab, admittedly biased narrative. Nonetheless, it ought to be remembered that this was the army that did eventually reach Damascus and defeat the Ottoman-Turks. Indeed, Lawrence's ability to adapt to its 'unorthodox' conduct had been praised by the very officers who could not or would not attempt to change their own ways, as we have seen earlier. Thus, it is within this context that Lawrence's celebration of the Arab army and its heroic-homoerotic bond should be read. After all, this is Lawrence's analysis of the conditions that contributed to its victory in the first place; that is, its *difference*.

Before I move on to Lawrence's accounts of Turkish male-to-male sexuality and point out its apparent correspondence with the Ottoman army's conduct, I am now going to briefly shed light on the boyish homoerotic romance of Farraj and Daud, the two Ageyli boys, who joined the Arab campaign uninvited. In Lawrence's words, the two boys "were an instance of the eastern boy and boy affection which the segregation of women made inevitable" (Loc. 3277-86). As we have seen, Lawrence's dismissal of women's presence in the Arabs' life is a recurrent theme; it serves to accentuate their male bonding. Citing it in the context of the young lovers' romance exposes its alleged entrenchment and early establishment in Arabian life. However, the two boys' connection to the larger narrative of *Seven Pillars* seems to bear more significance. For the story of the two boys appears to be a micro narrative representing and mimicking the collective make-up of the entire Arab camp. Their connection to the camp combines the homoerotic and the heroic. Indeed, the young lovers, who voluntarily join the Arab Revolt, fight in it and are heroically martyred.

From the start, the boys are portrayed as so mischievous that they are constantly in trouble and having to take some 'corporal punishment'. Nonetheless, their manifestly unconstrained behaviour, combined with their impulsive desire to join the "rebellion" adds to the contrast between the spontaneity of the Arab camp and the restrained orderliness of its

British counterpart. Remembering how they begged him to take them as his servants, Lawrence writes,

These were Daud the hasty and his love-fellow, Farraj; a beautiful, soft-framed, girlish creature, with innocent, smooth face and swimming eyes. They said they were for my service. I had no need of them; and objected that after their beating they could not ride. They replied they had now come bare-backed. I said I was a simple man who disliked servants about him. Daud turned away, defeated and angry; but Farraj pleaded that we must have men, and they would follow me for company and out of gratitude. While the harder Daud revolted, he went over to Nasir and knelt in appeal, all the woman of him evident in his longing. At the end, on Nasir's advice, I took them both, mainly because they looked so young and clean. (2011, Loc. 3287-93)

Farraj's subtle and gentle femininity is counterbalanced by Daud's typically masculine behaviour. Yet the pair seem to complement one another in perfect harmony. Needless to say, this is a manifestation of the Oriental camp's ability to blend masculine and feminine qualities, which, as Lawrence has indicated earlier, seems to endow the Arabs with a particular type of homogeneity. Lawrence takes an immediate liking to the boys; he explains how they gave him "great satisfaction" and how he "liked their freedom towards myself and admired their instinctive understanding with one another against the demands of the world" (Loc. 3385-87).

Lawrence idolises the two boys' romance and points out its 'superiority' within the otherwise collectively homoerotic conduct of the Arab camp. Lawrence explains how he "admired the contrast between Mohammed the lusty, heavy-footed peasant, and the lithe Ageyl, with Farraj and Daud dancing along, barefooted, delicate as thoroughbreds" (Loc. 3524-26). Clearly, the youthful boys stand out in this all-male environment – not necessarily for their implied innocence, though, as Lawrence is quick to point out. For the nature of the camp would take its toll on all of its constituents as though to further unite them. Describing the riding effect on the men, Lawrence writes,

Even our most solemn riders let themselves go a little, and the wilder ones became licentious. First amongst these, of course, were Farraj and Daud, my two imps, whose spirits not all the privations of our road had quelled for a moment. About their riding places in our line of march centred two constant swirls of activity or of accident, according as their quenchless mischief found a further expression. (2011, Loc. 3776-79)

There is an air of spontaneity in the conduct of the Arab camp in general and the two boys in particular. Lawrence seems to imply that such occurrences take place as a natural development that is inherently connected with the overall mood of the men, whose unorganised army structure enables them to respond spontaneously to these whims. The ambiguity with which these "swirls of activity" are depicted serves to enhance the fluidity of

the men's oscillation between the heroic and the homoerotic.²⁷⁸ After all, this is supposedly taking place while the army is marching on to its next encounter with the enemy.

Sadly, however, this harmonious image is tragically disturbed when Daud dies of cold in Azrak (Loc. 7337-44). The impact of his death is poignantly felt by his lover, Farraj, whose natural inclination to mischief is now all changed into a gloomy serenity and deep reflection on his sole existence without his lover. Lawrence explains,

These two had been friends from childhood, in eternal gaiety: working together, sleeping together, sharing every scrape and profit with the openness and honesty of perfect love. So I was not astonished to see Farraj look dark and hard of face, leaden-eyed and old, when he came to tell me that his fellow was dead; and from that day till his service ended he made no more laughter for us. He took punctilious care, greater even than before, of my camel, of the coffee, of my clothes and saddles, and fell to praying his three regular prayings every day. The others offered themselves to comfort him, but instead he wandered restlessly, grey and silent, very much alone. (2011, Loc. 7337-44)

Farraj's bereavement over the premature death of his lover seems to incite his own tragic death – or martyrdom. In a remarkable passage in *Seven Pillars*, Lawrence describes how he was left with the hard choice of having to finish off the badly injured and dying Farraj in order to save him from cruelty that he would have certainly been subjected to if found alive by the Turks.

In what appears to be an inexplicably suicidal charge, Farraj rides directly into the firing line of the Turkish soldiers, ignoring the Arabs' and Lawrence's warning cries. Seeing him "fall or leap out of the saddle" of his camel after a distinct shot, Lawrence explains how, "I was very anxious about Farraj. His camel stood unharmed by the bridge, alone. He might be hit, or might be following the enemy. I could not believe that he had deliberately ridden up to them in the open and halted; yet it looked like it" (2011, Loc. 7475). Is this an act of chivalric bravery or the manifestation of a suicidal death wish? Arriving at the scene, Lawrence notes how they found

²⁷⁸ Furthermore, this ambiguity appears to be reminiscent of that of the nature of 'courtly love' and its paradoxical vacillation between the spiritual and the physical, as indicated in Chapter Three. Despite Lawrence's overall emphasis on the sublime, elevating nature of the Arab army's articulation of male bonding and homoerotic desire, certain passages in Lawrence's narrative give the impression that this 'love' would often be expressed physically as though to complement its otherwise essentially spiritual performance. Nonetheless, as Lawrence stresses in an aforementioned quote, the act of fulfilling this desire remains largely "sexless", particularly when contrasted with the 'unthinkable' "sordid commercial[ity]" of heterosexual intercourse, as quoted earlier: "In horror of such sordid commerce our youth began indifferently to slake one another's few needs in their own clean bodies – a cold convenience that, by comparison, seemed sexless, even pure. Later, some began to justify this sterile process, and sower that friends quivering together in the yielding sand with intimate hot limbs in supreme embrace, found there hidden in the darkness a sensual co-efficient of the mental passion which was welding our souls and spirits in one flaming effort" (Lawrence 1979, p.9). As we will see in the next section, Lawrence's rendition of same-sex desire in the Ottoman-Turkish camp holds a different significance altogether.

[...] one dead Turk, and Farraj terribly wounded through the body, lying by the arch just as he had fallen from his camel. He looked unconscious; but, when we dismounted, greeted us, and then fell silent, sunken in that loneliness which came to hurt men who believed death near. We tore his clothes away and looked uselessly at the wound. The bullet had smashed right through him, and his spine seemed injured. The Arabs said at once that he had only a few hours to live. (2011, Loc. 7482)

The vividness with which Lawrence portrays the scene enhances the sense of heroism in the poignant image of the dying youth; Lawrence continues,

We tried to move him, for he was helpless, though he showed no pain. We tried to stop the wide, slow bleeding, which made poppy-splashes in the grass; but it seemed impossible, and after a while he told us to let him alone, as he was dying, and happy to die, since he had no care of Me. Indeed, for long he had been so, and men very tired and sorry often fell in love with death, with that triumphal weakness coming home after strength has been vanquished in a last battle. (2011, Loc. 7482)

In a desperate attempt to save his life, Lawrence tried to move him upon spotting a brigade of “fifty Turks” approaching in the distance; however, as Lawrence and the Arabs tried to “lift him, first in his cloak, afterwards in a blanket [...] consciousness was coming back, and he screamed so pitifully that we had not the heart to hurt him more” (2011, Loc. 7488). Left in this difficult position, Lawrence continues,

We could not leave him where he was, to the Turks, because we had seen them burn alive our hapless wounded. For this reason we were all agreed, before action, to finish off one another, if badly hurt: but I had never realized that it might fall to me to kill Farraj. I knelt down beside him, holding my pistol near the ground by his head, so that he should not see my purpose; but he must have guessed it, for he opened his eyes, and clutched me with his harsh, scaly hand, the tiny hand of these unripe Nejd fellows. I waited a moment, and he said, ‘Daud will be angry with you’, the old smile coming back so strangely to this grey shrinking face. I replied, ‘salute him from me’. He returned the formal answer, ‘God will give you peace’, and at last wearily closed his eyes. (2011, Loc. 7475-7505)

Farraj’s death is a double martyrdom. Whether he inflicted it upon himself or not, Farraj died in the battlefield of the Arab national movement, which he joined voluntarily. On the other hand, Lawrence seems to suggest that Farraj’s death might have been, partially at least, self-inflicted, for he wanted to be reunited with his lover, Daud, who had similarly died in the course of the Arab Revolt. All the same, both lovers had been united in their desire to join the national movement and their love for each other; eventually, they had been tragically (yet heroically) reunited in death. Farraj’s martyrdom epitomises the inherent connection between the heroic and the homoerotic in Lawrence’s depiction of the Arab camp. Interestingly, Lawrence positions himself centrally in this chivalric episode. For Farraj’s death had to be finalised and executed by Lawrence himself as though to endorse the tragic yet sublime act.

After all, this is Lawrence's "personal narrative"; that is, his artistic reproduction of the account of the Arab Revolt.

In this artistic reproduction, however, Lawrence's rendition of male love in the Arab army resonates with aspects of 'courtly love'. G. E. von Grunebaum (1952) defines the "essential characteristics of courtly love" and lists them as follows:²⁷⁹ "the belief in the ennobling force of love, the elevation of the beloved [...] above the lover, and the restriction of 'true' love to the ceaseless desire that is never to be realised." (p.233) Indeed, the "ennobling force of love" is a recurrent feature of the Arab army's interaction. As we have seen, Lawrence manages to tie the men's erotic attraction to each other with their noble cause; that is, their nationalist struggle to win freedom for their people. The micro-narrative of Daud and Farraj's love and heroic martyrdom epitomises Lawrence's embedment of the "ennobling force of love" and its integral relation to the fellowship of the Arab freedom fighters.

Additionally, other accounts of Arab homoerotic desire seem to adhere to characteristics of 'courtly love'. The emphasis on the 'spiritual' and the 'sexless' and their paradoxical co-existence with the frequent allusions to the 'physical' and the 'illicit' are common themes, recurrent in the quoted passages above. So are the "elevation of the beloved" and the "ceaselessness of desire that is never to be realised". Perhaps the latter subthemes are clearest in Lawrence's own poem to Dahoum, which has been visited in Chapter Three. In the poem, Lawrence, the poet, appears to display many of the symptoms of love-stricken troubadours. In his study of the meaning of courtly love, Herbert Moller (1960) argues that "Troubadour love [...] is a protracted yearning which steadily mounts up, as it cannot be appeased because of an unconscious prohibition." (p.43). Moller continues, "The anxiety of not receiving any love, or seeing the distant object of love fading away entirely, leads to feeling states described as sleeplessness, loss of appetite, and general bewilderment" (pp.43-44). As shown in the previous chapter, Lawrence's anxiety at losing Dahoum was evident in the poem; moreover, it manifested itself in his mother's remarks on his changed behaviour (sleeplessness, absent-mindedness and loss of appetite), which seem to conform to Moller's observation on grieving troubadours. After all, Dahoum's death symbolised a double failure for Lawrence: he was unable to reunite with his lover who had been awaiting him, nor was he able to achieve "freedom" for his race, the very "present" he had bravely set off to

²⁷⁹ Needless to say, medieval courtly love is strictly heterosexual in its nature; however, my analysis is concerned with Lawrence's superimposition of some of its characteristics onto his own interpretation of the manifestation of homoerotic desire and sexual tension in the Arab army. Lawrence's emphasis on the harmonious blending of the masculine and the feminine in the Arab can thus be seen in this light; that is, his reconstruction of the components of traditional courtly love and recasting it with a Uranian flavour.

procure in order to woo his beloved. In other words, the 'ennobling force' of Lawrence's love for Dahoum has also failed to accomplish its 'noble' task of restoring the Caliphate to Arab hands, hence the complex entrenchment of the homoerotic and the heroic in Lawrence's portrayal of the Arab Revolt and his rationale for joining it in the first place. By the same token, Lawrence's inability to attain his goal in his great chivalric endeavour renders his 'ceaseless desire' ultimately unrealised and eternally unrealisable – in the typical fashion of troubadours, who had inspired much of his fantasy in the first place.

To call Lawrence a 'modern troubadour' may be far-fetched; however, it would be difficult to ignore his superimposition of characteristics of courtly love on his depiction of homoerotic desire and male love in the Arab camp. In what follows, I am going to shed light on the 'other' signification Lawrence seems to assign to male-to-male sexuality in the Ottoman-Turkish camp.

Turkish 'sodomy': another perspective on homosexuality

In contrast to Lawrence's romanticised portrayal of the Arab camp stands his depiction of Turkish display of same-sex desire and what seems to be a discursive connection to Ottoman imperialist aggression. As James (1996) observes, "[f]or the Turks, Lawrence had nothing but vilification" (p.74); James continues,

An intemperate and bitter hatred of the Turks runs throughout the *Seven Pillars* which is unequalled in any other account of the war on this front. While he could have found abundant support for his views from the well-known evidence of the Armenian massacre, Lawrence chose to base his vituperation on a bogus assertion that half the Turkish army was infected with venereal diseases transmitted by sodomy. (p.74)

Yet it is not merely this accusation that characterises Lawrence's criticism of the Ottomans. For, unlike his glorification of the Arabs' 'noble' expression of same-sex desire, Lawrence's bias against the Turks is evident in his condemnation of their violent *articulation* of this very desire. The infamous Deraa incident, in which he was allegedly raped and tortured, represents his discursive association of Turkish cruelty with an aggressive form of sadist sexuality, set against the background of Ottoman imperialism. Interestingly, the historicity of this episode in particular has been doubted. Barr finds a disparity and a lack of corroboration between the dates and distances provided by Lawrence in his diary and those found in other sources (2007,

pp.193-97).²⁸⁰ Nonetheless, the episode remains an important part of Lawrence's "personal narrative".

Lawrence claims that he was captured by the Turks, who mistook him for a "Circassian deserter". Lawrence, who insisted on speaking "only Arabic" (2011, Loc.6394) during his capture, torture and rape, presents a physically tangible image of what had allegedly befallen him in Deraa that unfortunate night. He explains how Nahi Bey,²⁸¹ the Governor, wanted him:

In a breathless voice he told me to sit on the floor in front of him, and after that was dumb; while I gazed at the top of his great head, on which the bristling hair stood up, no longer than the dark stubble on his cheeks and chin. At last he looked me over, and told me to stand up: then to turn round. I obeyed; he flung himself back on the bed, and dragged me down with him in his arms. When I saw what he wanted I twisted round and up again, glad to find myself equal to him, at any rate in wrestling. (2011, Loc. 6356-63)

The juxtaposition of the handsomeness of the Arab men with the sheer unattractiveness of the Turkish Bey appears to polarise the scene from the beginning. Apart from the youthful tenderness of Daud and Farraj and the handsome "pillar-like" and "slender" Feisal, Lawrence has also celebrated the "beauty" of Prince Abdullah ibn el-Hussein: "No one could see him without the desire to see him again; especially when he smiled, as he did rarely, with both mouth and eyes at once. His beauty was a conscious weapon. He dressed spotlessly, all in black or all in white; and he studied gesture" (Loc. 6279-83). Moreover, Lawrence's emphasis on the *physicality* of the episode accentuates the sense of polarisation in his portrayal of the manifestation of same-sex desire in the two camps. The spiritual and philosophical connotations surrounding the Arab army's subtler articulation of homoerotic desire are indeed absent from Lawrence's rendition of homosexuality on the Ottoman-Turkish side. Lawrence describes how the situation evolves in rather grotesque detail; he writes,

I was obdurate, so he changed his tone, and sharply ordered me to take off my drawers. When I hesitated, he snatched at me; and I pushed him back. He clapped his hands for the sentry, who hurried in and pinioned me. The Bey cursed me with horrible threats: and made the man holding me tear my clothes away, bit by bit. His eyes rounded at the half-healed places where the bullets had flicked through my skin a little while ago. Finally he lumbered to his feet, with a glitter in his look, and began to paw me over. I bore it for a little, till he got too beastly; and then jerked my knee into him. (2011, Loc. 6363)

²⁸⁰ Aldrich (2003) also casts a doubt at the possibility of Lawrence being able to escape and reach safety 300 miles away considering the seriousness of his alleged wounds. He also points out that the incident has not been "substantiated by reports in British intelligence" (p.78). See Aldrich (p.78) and James (pp.193-197) for a detailed analysis of the episode and its doubted possibility.

²⁸¹ Another inconsistency lies in the name of the Bey, which appears differently in other non-literary accounts; see Barr (pp.193-197).

Having rejected the Bey's attempts, Lawrence would now have to bear the horrid consequences. The guards came in to restrain Lawrence and "brace [his] head back by the hair" while the Bey hit him across the face with his slipper. The Bey then

[...] leaned forward, fixed his teeth in my neck and bit till the blood came. Then he kissed me. Afterwards he drew one of the men's bayonets. I thought he was going to loll me, and was sorry: but he only pulled up a fold of the flesh over my ribs, worked the point through, after considerable trouble, and gave the blade a half-turn. This hurt, and I winced, while the blood wavered down my side, and dripped to the front of my thigh. He looked pleased and dabbled it over my stomach with his finger-tips. (2011, Loc. 6371)

Needless to say, the stress on the Ottoman Bey's rather animalistic sadism is sharply contrasted with the Arabs' articulation of homoerotic desire and the 'ennobling force' it seems to bestow on their nationalist struggle. The vacillation between the purely physical and the sublimely spiritual in Lawrence's rendition of the significance of same-sex desire is important. For even when the Arab fighters resort to one another to "slake" their physical needs, Lawrence insists that the practice remains "pure" and "sexless", as we have seen earlier.

In contrast, the Ottoman Bey's sexual expression is brutally physical and does indeed evoke pornographic imagery of Orientalist fantasies of sodomitical rape, as highlighted in certain anecdotes in Burton's "Terminal Essay" in Chapter Two. I will return to this point towards the end of this section as I revisit Burton's use of the Orient to produce narratives of 'homo-pornography' and compare it with Lawrence's. A comparative analysis of both Orientalists' contribution to Orientalist pornographic discourse will be presented after Lawrence's portrayal of the Deraa incident has been accounted for.

Taken downstairs by the Bey's corporal and guards, Lawrence describes how he had been kicked and then whipped severely with an especially nasty whip; he explains how the savage lashing continued and his mechanism of coping with it; he writes,

To keep my mind in control I numbered the blows, but after twenty lost count, and could feel only the shapeless weight of pain, not tearing claws, for which I had prepared, but a gradual cracking apart of my whole being by some too-great force whose waves rolled up my spine till they were pent within my brain, to clash terribly together. [...] After the corporal ceased, the men took up, very deliberately, giving me so many, and then an interval, during which they would squabble for the next turn, ease themselves, and play unspeakably with me. (2011, Loc. 6386)

Abuse and violation are imbedded in the Ottomans' articulation of male-to-male sexuality. In a sense, Ottoman homosexuality becomes an imperialist torture technique employed against Lawrence, the captured 'freedom fighter'. Lawrence continues,

Always for the first of every new series, my head would be pulled round, to see how a hard white ridge, like a railway, darkening slowly into crimson, leaped over my skin at the instant of each stroke, with a bead of blood where two ridges crossed. As the punishment proceeded the whip fell more and more upon existing weals, biting blacker or more wet, till my flesh quivered with accumulated pain, and with terror of the next blow coming. They soon conquered my determination not to cry, but while my will ruled my lips I used only Arabic, and before the end a merciful sickness choked my utterance. (2011, Loc. 6386-94)

The 'railway-shaped' impact left by Lawrence's tormenters on his naked body appears to be a loose allusion to his role in blowing up Turkish trains; it, thus, relinks the scene to the grand narrative of the Arab Revolt and the War on the Eastern Front. Lawrence's insistence on speaking Arabic, however, situates him more intrinsically in the polarised position of an 'Arab' freedom fighter heroically bearing the brunt of resisting his Ottoman-Turkish imperialist oppressors. This, in turn, seems to further polarise the two camps' uses and dichotomous expression of homosexuality, hence Lawrence's differently assigned significations of its portrayal in his book.

The violence of the scene picks up momentum in what follows. Having been severely whipped until bloodied, Lawrence remembers how he was then kicked by the corporal's "nailed boot" to get him up; at which point Lawrence smiles

[...] idly at him, for a delicious warmth, probably sexual, was swelling through me: and then that he flung up his arm and hacked with the full length of his whip into my groin. This doubled me half-over, screaming, or, rather, trying impotently to scream, only shuddering through my open mouth. [...] Another slash followed. A roaring, and my eyes went black: while within me the core of Me seemed to heave slowly up through the rending nerves, expelled from its body by this last indescribable pang. (2011, Loc. 6394-6402)

The sadism of the corporal seems to have now been met with a sort of masochistic desire on Lawrence's part.²⁸² All the same, however, the connection between pain, physicality and sexuality remains intact until the end; that is, until "the citadel of [Lawrence's] integrity had been irrevocably lost" (2011, Loc. 6436-37). For the violence of the scene culminates in an act of outright sodomitical rape, which, interestingly, Lawrence seems to prefer to the "flogging": "[...] I next knew that I was being dragged about by two men, each disputing over a leg as though to split me apart: while a third man rode me astride. It was momentarily better than more flogging" (2011, Loc. 6405-9). This climax, however, marks the end of Lawrence's Deraa

²⁸² This desire seems to have also manifested itself in the last eleven years of Lawrence's life, where he would hire a Scotsman to "beat him across his naked buttocks until he ejaculated" (Aldrich, p.72). Lawrence claimed that this was his punishment for a financial offence he had committed "against an uncle who, instead of having him arrested, would pay for him to be beaten" (p.72). Furthermore, Lawrence's body would be inspected by a friend and a doctor who were also recruited to "ascertain that he had been sufficiently punished and to report, by letter, to the uncle". Of course, Lawrence himself wrote the alleged uncle's responses and "arranged for the Scotsman to be paid" (p.72).

ordeal and saves him from further sexual assault from Nahi Bey, the Governor, who rejects him “in haste, as a thing too torn and bloody for his bed” (2011, Loc. 6402). Ironically, instead of Lawrence, it was the “crestfallen corporal, being the youngest and best-looking of the guard” who had to stay behind and share the Bey’s bed that night (Loc. 6402).

Apart from its symbolic significance as Lawrence’s rendition of Turkish-Ottoman same-sex desire, the Deraa incident has a strategic connection to the cause of the Revolt. For Lawrence discovers an important valley while escaping from the shed where he was left after having his wounds dressed. The valley, Lawrence explains, “provided the hidden road by which our projected raid could attain Deraa town secretly, and surprise the Turks. So, in escaping I solved, too late, the problem which had brought me to Deraa” (Loc. 6426). This discovery endows his suffering with a shroud of heroic sacrifice – albeit sexual in nature. Nonetheless, the discovery relinks the incident with the grand nationalist-heroic narrative of Lawrence’s portrayal of the Arab movement.

Nonetheless, the sexual explicitness of the Deraa scene, with its vivid description of violence and sodomitical rape, recalls scenes from Burton’s accounts of Oriental ‘homopornography’ and his use of Arabic literature and culture to propagate such pornographic narratives of homosexual rape. Indeed, we have come across examples of such male-rape fantasies (or, perhaps, anxieties) in the “Terminal Essay”, where the tension lies between the hyper-virile Oriental sodomite and the vulnerable European man/youth.²⁸³ This polarisation of the rape narrative between the masterful Oriental (the Bey) and the victimised European (Lawrence himself) is certainly present in Lawrence’s portrayal of his calamity, which aligns his narrative with Burton’s when it comes to the reproduction of male-rape pornographic fantasies. However, the vivid description of the violence and abuse that frame the rape scene from the beginning exposes Lawrence’s masochistic tendencies. This, I argue, brings his rendition of Oriental sodomitical pornography to a different level in that the masochistic becomes an *integral* part of the pornographic. In his study of the history of pornography, Marcus Wood (2002) highlights the difficulty of coming up with a single definition of what would constitute pornography (p.92); notwithstanding, he offers the following three-point compound definition in an attempt to contain all that may be classified as pornography:

One: A depiction with sexual element in which there is clear force, or an unequal power that spells coercion. It may be very blatant, with weapons of torture or bondage, wounds

²⁸³ As pointed out in Chapter Two, such homosexual rape narratives challenge other European notions about Oriental ‘feminised’ passivity and European virile and active masterfulness as stereotypically depicted in Orientalist discourse.

and bruises, some clear humiliation ... It may be much more subtle: a physical attitude of conquerer and victim, the use of race or class difference to imply the same thing, perhaps a very unequal nudity, with one person exposed and vulnerable while the other is clothed. In either case there is no sense of equal choice or equal power ... pornography is about power and sex-as-weapon ... its message is violence, dominance or conquest. Two: pornography is present where the victim is represented (i) as a dehumanised sexual object, thing, or commodity; (ii) as a sexual object which enjoys pain or humiliation; (iii) as a sexual object cut up, or mutilated or physically hurt; (iv) where the victim is depicted in postures of sexual submission or sexual servility, including inviting penetration; (v) body parts are exhibited such as the victim is reduced to those parts; (vi) the victim is shown penetrated by objects or animals; (vii) where the victim is shown in scenarios of degradation, injury, torture, shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, or hurt in a context that make these conditions sexual. Three: 'pornography is material that explicitly represents or describes dreading or abusive sexual behaviour so as to endorse and/or recommend the behaviour as described.' (p.93)

Clearly, Lawrence's description of what befell him at Deraa does indeed conform to almost every aspect of Wood's comprehensive definition of the pornographic. Likewise, Burton's accounts of homosexual rape carry elements of this broad definition of pornography.

Importantly, however, much of Burton's reputation as a pornographer stems from his *translation* of existing Oriental texts and the *third-person* voyeuristic commentary he provided under the guise of anthropological scholarship. Even when Burton allegedly visited the male brothels at Karachi and produced his infamous report on pederasty, he never portrayed himself as a participant – let alone positioning himself at the *receiving end* of the sexual act. Despite his remarkable reliance on first-hand experience in uncovering and reproducing accounts of Eastern homosexuality, Burton's third-person narrator's voice kept him somehow safely distanced from any direct personal involvement in such 'Other' sexual performances. In this light, Burton's contribution to pornographic discourse remains chiefly *textual* in that he sustained his disengagement from any direct involvement in experiencing the narratives of pederasty, which he allegedly observed and recorded. All the same, Burton was unapologetic about the explicit nature of his translational work – despite (or perhaps because of) the fierce debates it initiated around literary sexual morality and pornography. As indicated in Chapter Two, the polemic against Burton's otherwise scholarly work stems from its perceived glorification of pornography, which does indeed conform to Lynn Hunt's view of "pornography" as a "site for cultural contestation", inciting "shifting culture wars between oppressors/censors and pornographers/free thinkers" (cited in Wood 2002, p.90). Importantly, however, Burton's contribution to literary pornography relied mainly on translating and retelling episodes of Oriental sexuality, supported by his Orientalist's voice as an authority on the topic. For Burton, Arab homo-pornography, in particular, was an obsession on which he

wanted to pose as the absolute authority, as is evident in his relentless pursuit of the Arabic manuscript of *The Perfumed Garden* and its alleged (perhaps imaginary) twenty-first chapter on pederasty. Indeed, Burton's homo-pornographic narratives remain mainly *textual* and *translational* at large.

Lawrence's approach to homo-pornography, on the other hand, is experiential and subjective in essence, for he positions himself *at the receiving end* of a violent act of sodomitical rape. The fact that this episode is narrated in the *first person* situates Lawrence centrally in his own rendition of Oriental sodomy and renders him the *object* of his very own pornographic narrative of homosexual subjugation. Furthermore, the subtle allusion to the kindling of his own sexual passions (feeling a "delicious warmth" and preferring being "ridden astride" to the beating) heightens the *mutually experienced sexual nature* of the torture-rape scene. In other words, Lawrence alludes to a masochistic type of *sexual pleasure* that *he* seems to have experienced and enjoyed. In contrast, Burton's depiction of the European youths' homosexual subjugation in the "Terminal Essay" is devoid of references to their erotic personal experiences, which is overshadowed by an emphasis on the Eastern sodomite's own sexual pleasure and exaggerated indulgence.

Yet both, Burton and Lawrence, seem to draw on existing fantasies from the collective of Orientalist Victorian erotica. Just as Burton's pornographic discourse relied on revealing and accentuating the sexuality of familiar Oriental tales and anecdotes, Lawrence's, too, seems to evoke imagery from *The Lustful Turk* (1828). As indicated in Chapter Two, the anonymously published text depicts the newly aroused sexual passions of two female English abductees, Emily Barlow and Sylvia Carey, who go through the ordeal of being anally raped by Ali, the Ottoman Dey of Algiers, who captures them and adds them to his harem. Interestingly, the anal rape and the ensuing humiliation and debasement that befall the Englishwomen appear to arouse their masochistic sexual desires. Lawrence's depiction of his ordeal (being captured by the Ottomans and placed in a highly polarised power position) is indeed reminiscent of the two Englishwomen's. Likewise, his hint at the "delicious [sexual] warmth" he started to feel is also indicative of the subtle awakening of his sexual desires. Importantly, however, Lawrence seems to stage a *homosexual adaptation* of this Orientalist *fictional* narrative of anal rape and presents it as a *factual* incident in his historical rendition of the Arab Revolt. This, I argue, constitutes a critical landmark in his approach to narratives of Oriental homo-pornography, where he becomes both: *director and actor*. His approach is unabashedly subjective, involving him as a 'real' *participating masochist*, while still drawing on Orientalist fictional fantasies of

anal rape and their associated pornographic imagery of violence, debasement, humiliation and sexual awakening.

As indicated above, the historicity of the Deraa incident is doubted; however, it constitutes part of Lawrence's "personal narrative", hence its significance. Moreover, the incident heightens certain emphases and polarisations in Lawrence's biased narrative, reasserting his systematic championing of the Arabs and condemnation of the Turks. Not only does it highlight the carefully choreographed significations that he assigns to battlefield manifestations of homosexuality, but it also repositions him firmly as a 'true' heroic freedom fighter sacrificing his body and the "citadel of his integrity" in the Turco-Arab conflict. The episode also illustrates Lawrence's repertoire of the various possibilities (and significations) of male-to-male sexual expression – be they symbolic, erotic and even pornographic. Aldrich observes that "the Dera'a incident suggests that Lawrence's experience of the Arab and Turkish world (whether real or imagined) was dramatically sexual. He had observed the sexual play of his companions with mixed emotions of attraction and fear, voyeurism and horror" (2003, p.78). Importantly, however, these "mixed emotions" are not randomly expressed. As we have seen, there seems to be a clear and deliberate correspondence in Lawrence's value-based depictions of male-to-male sexuality. While the homoeroticised male bonding of the Arab fighters valorises their heroic nationalist cause, the Ottoman-Turks' violent sadism seems to reflect their imperialist aggression.

Indeed, this correspondence is further exposed in Lawrence's juxtaposition of the Arab camp's chivalry and the Ottoman army's cruel 'barbarity' as documented in *Seven Pillars*.²⁸⁴ For, apart from highlighting the Turks' alleged 'sexual debasement' and 'unclean' disease-infected army, Lawrence's "bitter hatred" for the Ottomans is also manifest in his depiction of their dishonourable behaviour in the War. In graphic detail, Lawrence describes the massacre committed by the Turks in Tafas, Tallal's village.²⁸⁵ As Lawrence and the Arabs approach the massacre-stricken village, they discover the horrific havoc inflicted on the village and its civilians by Jemal Pasha's heavily armed lancer regiment;²⁸⁶ Lawrence writes,

²⁸⁴ It ought to be noted that although, cruelty is not portrayed as an exclusive Turkish quality in Lawrence's book, it seems to particularly characterise Turkish imperialist behavior and/or be the catalyst for other forms of violent retaliation committed by others in the Arab Revolt.

²⁸⁵ Tallal is one of the prominent leaders in the Arab Revolt; Lawrence admired his bravery and chivalrous conduct. After his tragic death, Lawrence described him as a "splendid man leader, [a] fine horseman, [a] courteous and strong companion of the road" (2011, Loc. 9240).

²⁸⁶ Jemal Pasha (1872-1922) was an important member of the Young Turks. In 1915, he famously ordered the execution of Muslim and Christian Arab nationalist intellectuals in Damascus and Beirut; they came to be known as the 'Arab martyrs' (Choueiri, p.82). As pointed out earlier, these executions had been crucial in further agitating Arab national sentiment and prompting calls for independence. In fact, they were the main reason for the al-Fatat

The village lay stillly under its slow wreaths of white smoke, as we rode near, on our guard. Some grey heaps seemed to hide in the long grass, embracing the ground in the close way of corpses. We looked away from these, knowing they were dead; but from one a little figure tottered off, as if to escape us. It was a child, three or four years old, whose dirty smock was stained red over one shoulder and side, with blood from a large half-fibrous wound, perhaps a lance thrust, just where neck and body joined. (2011, Loc. 9198-9209)

Lawrence continues,

The child ran a few steps, then stood and cried to us in a tone of astonishing strength (all else being very silent), 'Don't hit me, Baba'. Abd el Aziz, choking out something – this was his village, and she might be of his family – flung himself off his camel, and stumbled, kneeling, in the grass beside the child. His suddenness frightened her, for she threw up her arms and tried to scream; but, instead, dropped in a little heap, while the blood rushed out again over her clothes; then, I think, she died. We rode past the other bodies of men and women and four more dead babies, looking very soiled in the daylight, towards the village; whose loneliness we now knew meant death and horror. By the outskirts were low mud walls, sheepfolds, and on one something red and white. I looked close and saw the body of a woman folded across it, bottom upwards, nailed there by a saw bayonet whose haft stuck hideously into the air from between her naked legs. She had been pregnant, and about her lay others, perhaps twenty in all, variously killed, but set out in accord with an obscene taste. (2011, Loc. 9198-9209)

The cruelty of what the Turks had allegedly perpetrated is sharply contrasted with Lawrence's depiction of the Arab fighters' 'contract of honour'.²⁸⁷ Moreover, the reference to the "bayonet", which was also used to torture Lawrence during his rape at Deraa, is reminiscent of the earlier association between Turkish violence and sexual abuse. After all, the "bayonet" represents phallic aggression, particularly when it was left "stuck hideously into the air from between [the women's] naked legs". Earlier in the book, Lawrence had described how on one occasion, the women, children and even the men on board an exploded Turkish train were left unhurt; Lawrence writes, "Seeing me tolerably unemployed, the women rushed, and caught at me with howls for mercy. I assured them that all was going well [...]" (2011, Loc. 5267-74).²⁸⁸ Needless to say, this contrast between the two camps' alleged behaviours goes hand in hand with Lawrence's polarised depiction of the entire episode of the Arab Revolt.

Society's decision to support Sharif Hussein and the cause of the Arab Revolt. Thus, by citing him, Lawrence appears to be relinking him to Ottoman imperialism *vis-à-vis* the 'just' cause of the Arab national movement.

²⁸⁷ As indicated earlier in this chapter, Prince Abdullah makes a non-sectarian vow to be kind and merciful to women and children and all those who spoke Arabic. Abdullah's vow heightens the Arabs' 'chivalrous' behaviour *vis-à-vis* the Turks' 'lowly' and 'debased' cowardliness in Lawrence's narrative. Furthermore, Abdullah's vow evokes the ideals of Malory's knighthood, which, as Cooper argues, are "summarised in the oath sworn by the Round Table knights: to avoid treason and wrongful quarrel; to show mercy; never to offer violence, especially sexual violence, to [...] women and to fight on their behalf." (p.xiii). In this light, Lawrence appears to align certain elements of his narrative of the Arab Revolt with the knightly elements in the Arthurian legends. This, of course, can be seen in line with his enactment of his chivalric fantasy in the Arab Revolt.

²⁸⁸ Amusingly, Lawrence tells of an old dame on board the stricken train, who, in gratefulness, later sent him a "a pleasant little Baluchi carpet [...]" in memory of an odd meeting" (2011, Loc. 5287-92). See the full incident in Lawrence (2011, Loc. 5267-92).

Upon seeing what has become of his village, Tallal, the “fine horseman”, rushes towards the last lines of the withdrawing Turkish regiment in a desperate attempt to retaliate. Tallal’s rush echoes Farraj’s earlier semi-suicidal (yet typically chivalric) endeavour. In Lawrence’s words, Tallal

[...] gave one moan like a hurt animal; then rode to the upper ground and sat there a while on his mare, shivering and looking fixedly after the Turks. I moved near to speak to him, but Auda caught my rein and stayed me. Very slowly Tallal drew his head-cloth about his face; and then he seemed suddenly to take hold of himself, for he dashed his stirrups into the mare’s flanks and galloped headlong, bending low and swaying in the saddle, right at the main body of the enemy. (2011, Loc. 9209-17)

And not unlike Farraj’s, Tallal’s act was to result in his heroic martyrdom. Lawrence narrates how it unfolds romantically:

It was a long ride down a gentle slope and across a hollow. We sat there like stone while he rushed forward, the drumming of his hoofs unnaturally loud in our ears, for we had stopped shooting, and the Turks had stopped. Both armies waited for him; and he rocked on in the hushed evening till only a few lengths from the enemy. Then he sat up in the saddle and cried his war-cry, ‘Tallal, Tallal’, twice in a tremendous shout. Instantly their rifles and machine-guns crashed out, and he and his mare, riddled through and through with bullets, fell dead among the lance points. (2011, Loc. Loc. 9217-24)

The dramatization of Tallal’s death serves to contrast his heroically spontaneous act with the dishonourable behaviour of the Turks and the cold-bloodedness with which they had committed the massacre. Like Farraj, and others, Tallal’s life ended with the destruction of his village and people. Yet they all died for the grander ambition of the Arab national movement and its aim to restore ‘Arab glory’. Indeed, Lawrence’s artistic reproduction of this historical narrative (whether real or imaginary) is discursively pro-Arab and blatantly anti-Turkish.

One vision: two perspectives

As we have seen, the complex narratives that placed Lawrence at the heart of the Arab Revolt appear to be further complicated by his insightful awareness of the main demands and underpinnings of the Arab national movement. From situating Islam strategically within the national narrative to emphasising the unifying role of the Arabic language and literature, much of Lawrence’s analysis is reflected in the various complex narratives of Arab nationalists. Yet, while Lawrence appears to agree with Arab nationalists about their cultural and political emphases, his literary rendition of homoerotic desire is at odds with the changing discourse of literary sexual morality in Arabic literature. In other words, if we consider *Seven Pillars* as a literary account telling the story of the Arab national movement and praising the Arabs’ heroic

achievements, we can perhaps see the irony, which characterises Lawrence's portrayal of homoeroticism in the Arab saga. For the significance that Lawrence assigned to the Arabs' manifestation of same-sex love contradicts the newly adopted significance, which Arab nationalists and *Nahda* intellectuals were assigning to their own literary accounts of homoerotic desire.

Yet it is interesting to reflect on the contrary significations, which literary depictions of homoeroticism came to mean for Lawrence and Arab *Nahda* scholars. In a sense, they both used same-sex desire as a *marker* to signify *difference*. Ironically, however, when 'difference' meant the 'sublime' combination of the homoerotic and the heroic in Lawrence's narrative, 'difference' meant the disassociation from older forms of male-to-male romantic bonding, even if metaphorical, in the *Nahda* discourse. Nonetheless, both Lawrence and the *Nahda* scholars shared the nationalist vision, which aimed at accentuating the Arabs' 'difference'. The disagreement arose about *how* this 'difference' was to be articulated and what it would signify. Hence the shared vision with the two perspectives in Lawrence's and the Arabs' rendition of the causes, aims and meaning of the Arab national movement at large.

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Conclusion

Yes, this old isthmus of Suez, stony place,
this empty and gloomy desert, the sea will conquer
it for its own empire, and thus lengthen for us
our shores.

The love of this sea for the other sea is like
the lover if the pearl for the breast of beautiful
women. There our ships will sail like
betrothed women, and the men whom we love
will hasten among us.

The men of the deserts, the men of the cultivated
areas, attracted by the seductive charms of
this, will come to us like fruitful
rains; the marvels of their industry will come
to caress us ...

Go and say to the Orient, to the West,
go and say to foreigners and Arabs: distances
have torn off the veil which covered
them, and our society is flourishing forever.

(Rifa'a al-Tahtawi 1869, cited in Hopwood 1999, p.68)

When the Suez Canal opened in 1869, Khedive Ismail of Egypt organised a great ceremony and invited European royalty and nobility to mark the occasion (Hopwood 1999, p.68). Al-Tahtawi's poem above was one of the multi-lingual poems composed to celebrate this "genuine" coming together of East and West (Hopwood, p.68). The poem appears to celebrate the occasion with subtle sexualised imagery. Nonetheless, the focus appears to be mainly collaborative, envisaging a future where Easterners cohabit with Westerners and benefit from the West's technology by tearing off the "veil" that had covered the metaphorical "distances" of the past.

Indeed, this vision of embracing European scientific and cultural modernity was to take place gradually since the Euro-Arab cultural encounter in the nineteenth century. However, the process involved an assimilationist trend on the part of *Nahda* scholars. And, as we have seen, it culminated in the rejection of the now-incompatible material rediscovered in the repertoire of Arab cultural heritage. In the meantime, Orientalists had been projecting their own readings onto Arabic literature and culture alike. Part of this projection involved an act of conflation between 'text' and 'experience', as has been highlighted in the course of this thesis. Although this conflation manifested itself in various forms, it seems to have had an

epistemological root. Certainly, this is true of Burton's and Lawrence's attractions to the East. For they went East to seek and reproduce types of knowledge. In this, their shared approach converges with that of *Nahda* scholars, whose outlook to Europe had been scholarly from the start.

Yet we ought to remember that this intellectual odyssey had been largely triggered by a perception of 'difference', which was often valorised, albeit differently and for various aims and purposes. However, by adopting Orientalist critical tools and methodologies, *Nahda* scholars were effectively eroding this sense of 'difference' between the two societies' intellectual outlook, hence the resultant anxiety about certain accounts of past cultural heritage. Importantly, however, this anxiety was precisely a product of re-Orientalism; that is, applying Orientalist conflation of 'text' and 'experience' to one's own cultural heritage. By so doing, *Nahda* scholars and their successors were inevitably eroding their native constructions of what constituted certain concepts, such as literary sexual morality. This, in turn, was to reshape their views on such matters and make them more in line with European norms.

Significantly, however, this process seems to have gone largely unnoticed by Orientalists such as Burton and Lawrence, who happened to be contemporary 'chance witnesses' to this change that had been taking place in the Arab East. Indeed, both Orientalists were situated quite intrinsically within it. As we have seen, Burton's obsession with Arabic literature was to mark him out as one of the most prominent Orientalists of his time. For his part, Lawrence enjoyed a very central position within the various strata of Arab society before and during the First World War and the Arab movement. However, considering both Orientalists' close connection with the Arab East, there appears to be a paradox in their epistemological accounts of Arab homoeroticism on the one hand, and the changing attitudes towards literary representations of male-to-male romance in Arab culture, on the other. Nonetheless, the disparity between these Orientalists' reflections on the subject and those of *Nahda* scholars is a very intriguing one. For it is this disparity that perpetuates the perceptions of 'difference', which would in turn sustain the two societies' mutual fascination with one another, stimulating further curiosity. For without a perception of 'difference', there would be no urge for knowledge. Such seems to be the relationship between East and West – a constant inquiry into a perceived 'difference'.

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